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C O N T E N T S

In the television and film industry, the logo takes a new form. Rather than a still icon or image, the logo comes to life through sound and animation. It grabs the audience's attention.

The purpose of this thesis is to create a motion graphic logo for four cable broadcast networks. The four networks are CNN, ESPN, MTV, and the Sci-Fi channel. These motion graphic logos will integrate visual and sound effects with live footage to enhance the still icons that represent the respective broadcast networks. Motion graphic logos of cable networks should do more than stimulate the senses: the challenge is to capture the essence of the networks in an appropriate, creative display. A viewer should be able to readily perceive the image the networks want to present through these short video clips.

Currently motion graphic logos consist of various clips combined with sound to present a simple video. The goal is to create recognition of the various broadcast companies through these logos.

The synergy of creative expression and technical skills, a key part of the multimedia production process, will be explored along with the various ways to blend the two disciplines. The objective will be to find the most effective way to create value.

The final movie will be a looped VHS tape. The VHS tape

will be an intergration of work from multiple platforms and tools. At each step the content of the media will be retouched and refined to suit the video platform.

The significance of this final movie will be that it has combined various digital editing techniques and creative design to further enhance the process of brand recognition of the broadcast network through a more stimulating presentation.

The first step in any creative endeavor is vision. This is true in multimedia design as the developer begins work with an idea in mind. As the work progresses, the design develops and evolves as a more refined creative vision is integrated with the realities of technology. It is hoped that the vision of this thesis project will culminate in just such an integration of technology and creativity.

A logo is one of the basic elements in the identity of a corporation or a brand. It can be typographical, figurative, symbolic, abstract, or a combination of these. A logo should be unique to the company it represents. (Morgan p.150)

A logo animation can be very engaging and aesthetically pleasing, but if it has no other purpose its value is limited. The ideal logo animation has to have a commercial application. It is most effective if it contributes to a broader brand as opposed to being a freestanding symbol. In order for a broadcast logo to have the desired effect it must have the following qualities:

1. Distinctiveness

2. Visibility

3. Usability

4. Memorability

5. Universality

6. Durability

7. Timelessness

(English, p.11).

Corporate Identity

While broadcast networks such as ABC and NBC have historically used slogans to market their programming, cable networks have traditionally used branding, in which consumers are led to identify the company or product with a specific image.(Riggs, P.8) This branding is closely tied to the corporate identity that is so important for a cable network to maintain such as CNN (brand-globe image to represent an international feel).

"Corporate identity consists of a complete visual language, not just a trade mark. If it's well done, corporate identity can communicate a lot about the workings of a company. It can say a lot about how a business runs. But the most important function of corporate identity is to increase brand recognition.....Brand recognition is the most important value of corporate identity for a company." (Geissbuhler, p. 168)

In keeping with this approach of brand recognition, cable networks use motion graphics to anchor their corporate identity.

Motion graphics and good motion design have become necessities in the television and film industry.

"With the globalization of broadcast, cable and satellite television, Motion Design is recognized as a seminal ingredient to the success of the worldwide film and television business. Indeed, it is an art in itself. Now, as television becomes digital and interactive as well as the Internet becoming increasingly media rich, a defining moment in Motion design is upon us all–where the Art, Business and Technology of Motion Design will become increasingly more important to every media brand." (BDAweb)

As the television industry has matured from one or two black and white channels to the media empires we see today, motion graphics design is also maturing into an important part of any media brand.

Understanding the Cable Networks

Before creating a logo animation that presents a corporate identity, an understanding of the identity is necessary. This understanding can be established by gaining key information through research. In researching each network, there were found four areas of interest that relate to the design of broadcast logo animation. By establishing an understanding of these area topics, one can better grasp the

spirit of each network. This deeper understanding facilitates the transfer of the brand and image of the product through the use of an effective broadcast logo animation. These areas include the following:

Focus: Goals and purposes of the network

Audience: The targeted market segment

Brand: The image that the network is projecting to the outside world

Programming: The type of programming broadcast by the network

CNN

Founded by Ted Turner, the Cable News Network is the recognized leader in the cable news industry. At its inception many critics did not believe that a channel devoted only to news was feasible. Today CNN has expanded from a single news channel to a news "empire."

• Focus

The focus of CNN is to bring reliable and comprehensive news with a global focus as fast as possible to the viewer. While other news programs were thirty minutes to an hour at only a specific time of the day, CNN decided that there was a market for "All news all the time." The goal of CNN being a "reputable sober source for information" (Riggs, P.8) is supported by the tremendous resources of the

Turner and now Time Warner media empire.

• Audience

CNN has not catered to only a single segment. CNN is a universal news source. CNN is for people who want "hard news."(Riggs, P.8) Because CNN is a global product, the audience for CNN is also global. This international audience is associated with the global aspect of the CNN brand.

• Brand

CNN has succeeded in establishing its brand in the cable industry. Throughout the world CNN is recognized as a reliable source of news. During the Gulf War, ABC reported that CNN was a major source of intelligence information regarding the Iraq conflict. In addition CNN has expanded and leveraged its brand name beyond its original scope and into other cable channels: top stories can be seen every half hour on Headline News, twenty-four hour financial coverage is available on CNNFN, and twenty-four hour sports coverage is available on CNNSI. In addition, a major player in World Wide Web news is CNN.COM. With its expansion into more channels and diverse media throughout the world, CNN has become a globally recognized brand.

• Programming

Various types of programming within the CNN brand may target particular market segments. For instance, the financial news program targets adult professionals. Coverage of the Gulf War in Iraq targeted all market segments, as it was important to the whole nation. There is a wealth of diverse programming on CNN beyond the "hard news": interview shows such as "Larry King Live" have a human interest emphasis, and "Crossfire" provides a debate forum for conservative and liberal political views.

ESPN

Founded in 1979 by Bill Rasmussen, the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network is the largest and most successful sports channel(Riggs, P.130). ESPN has grown in parallel with the evolution of sports into a pop culture phenomenon. Athletes such as Michael Jordan are more than just players, they are celebrities in their own right(Riggs, P.131). As of 1998 ESPN was being viewed in 78 million homes(Riggs, P.131) and according to the Boston Globe, it was "hailed as cable's most financially successful experiment."

• Focus

Sport is the one word that represents the focus of ESPN. ESPN's

goal is to be the single source for anything to do with sports. The

objective is for sports to be the first thing that comes to the average

person's mind when they hear ESPN. This includes sporting

events, sporting news, and even human interest stories related to

sports. Through this focus and with its first mover advantage ESPN

has acquired its dominant position today.

• Audience

ESPN would like to reach anyone with even a passing interest in

sports. ESPN possesses a certain cosmopolitan appeal in the world

of sports; however, the core audience for ESPN has always been

men between the ages of 18 and 34(Riggs, P.132).

• Brand

The success of the ESPN brand is indicated by the numerous imita-

tions by competitors and other cable channels.(Riggs, P.132) Also,

various movies such as "Jerry Maguire" and "The Waterboy"

placed ESPN programs. The ESPN brand has truly proliferated into

pop culture and is equated with sports. SportsCenter, ESPN's flag-

ship program, was quoted by Entertainment Weekly, "Now

SportsCenter is part of pop culture."

ESPN has leveraged its brand to start new channels such as ESPN2, ESPN International, and ESPN Classic. ESPN has also expanded its brand to a magazine, webpage, and even a restaurant.

• Programming

All programming on ESPN is sports related. The diverse range of programming varies from live coverage of baseball games to interview programs with star athletes. SportsCenter, with its own advertising campaign, is by far the most watched sports show on television.

MTV

While ESPN and CNN were created to fill gaps in the coverage of their respective subject matter, MTV made its own market. Established sports and news broadcasting existed long before ESPN or CNN came into existence. However, music videos did not have a sizable market until MTV created this new phenomenon of pop culture. Founded in 1981, MTV was the first cable channel to display music videos.

• Focus

The focus of Music Video Television is, as its name implies, music

videos. Although some critics have speculated that MTV has strayed away from its core of music, MTV's focus has always been music television(Lenderman, CableWorld). Along with showing music videos, MTV would like to celebrate the artform of music videos. Another guiding theme is to make viewers feel like MTV belongs to them, giving it a populist appeal to the younger generation.

• Audience

MTV's target has been the youth market. The 18-34 segment is the primary audience for all of MTV's programming (Reynolds, CableWorld). This concentrated segment focus allows MTV to concentrate its resources in serving its chosen market's specific interests.

• Brand

MTV's brand is that of the young generation. MTV is associated with the vigor of youth. By continuing to "celebrate the artform of music videos"(Lenderman, CableWorld) and providing supporting programming for this theme, MTV has maintained its brand image of something that is new and exciting. MTV has recently expanded its brand through the production of movies targeted to the youth market.

• Programming

MTV's programming primarily deals with music videos and with

the musicians. In much of the programming, the viewer is given a deeper understanding of the videos from the artist's point of view. Along with music videos, non-music programming tailored to the youth viewer is presented. For example, the Real World and Road Rules are documentary style human-interest stories that contain no music videos.

The annual MTV music awards has been a mainstay in defining MTV. Held once a year, it is "Cliff notes to the year in popular music."(Lenderman, CableWorld) This one event adds credibility to MTV's lead role in music culture.

SCI-FI

Mitchell Rubenstein founded the Sci-Fi channel in 1992. Although there was some difficulty in launching the network, in the form of numerous delays, it has flourished in the cable industry. It initially opened in 10 million homes in 1992. As of 1998 it had reached 49 million homes.(Donlon, July 1991)

• Focus

The focus of the Sci-Fi channel is science fiction as the name implies. The goal of Sci-Fi is to be the primary source of science fiction pro-

gramming on cable.

• Audience

Science fiction has a broad market penetrating multiple market seg-

ments. There is no true core audience. Following the success of

such themes as Star Wars and Star Trek, the universality of science

fiction and the acceptance of it in mainstream media is a distinct

advantage for the Sci-Fi Channel.(Donlon, Sep. 1992)

• Brand

Sci-Fi's branding strategy is anchored by the "planet" logo that dis-

tinguishes it. Throughout all of the programming, a semi-transpar-

ent version of the symbol resides on the bottom right corner of the

screen to reinforce the brand of the Sci-Fi Channel.

• Programming

Science fiction is the only type of programming that resides on the

Sci-Fi Channel. The first season saw re-runs of popular shows and

movies such as Star Wars, Battle Star Galactica, and Alien Nation.

However, Sci-Fi's programming strategy isn't rooted in re-runs.

There are many Sci-Fi original programming projects such as made

for TV movies (Homewrecker), NASA Watch, and Haunted House

Game Show. (Donlon, Sep. 1992)

The challenge in this project is to integrate technology with creative vision to create something of more value than the sum of its parts. Also the final product should reflect the theme and focus of the network it represents.

Choosing the Media

To obtain a synergy of creative vision and technical proficiency, motion graphic logo animation on videotape was chosen for numerous reasons. The attraction of the production of a motion graphic video is that there are fewer limitations than other presentation platforms. The nature of video media provides that the designer does not have to compromise animation quality because of the color, speed, resolution, and time limitations presented by other forms of media. Therefore, the presentation can be vivid and more focused on imagination with fewer creative hindrances.

In the production of other multimedia products, limitations on size or color hinder the quality of the final product. For example, motion graphic files are generally compressed and filtered on the web because of performance issues with uncompressed files. Such factors have an effect on the web, interactive CD-ROMs, and kiosks, but do not hinder digital video production. The file size and

quality of the motion graphic is only limited by the hardware used in production.

Before the motion graphics were created, many graphics software packages were evaluated. Strengths and weaknesses of various applications were assessed in order to choose the appropriate tools. With the ability to combine the strengths of the various digital tools, a better understanding of the overall multimedia production process was achieved. The integration of creative expression with fundamental technical skills is an important part of bringing an idea in one's mind into the reality of a multimedia presentation.

Generallly, it is easy to integrate live video clips, still images, and sound into motion graphics on this platform. To combine them and maintain the integrity of the vision is the challenge in creating multimedia products.

However, I did run into some specific issues related to the production process. For example, I began my work on a Macintosh and then transfered it to Avid where the compositions were finalized. As a result, I discovered that my animations always palyed too fast in Avid, so I had to make several iterations for speed adjustments.

Production Steps

Multiple steps are required to integrate the various tools used to

bring about the final product. Still images, video clips, and visual effects were utilized throughout the process to bring about the smoothly intergrated look of the final product. The following steps were taken:

• Design

Photoshop was used to support the visualization by creating tangible products of creative thoughts and to explore the feasibility of different ideas. The screen size during this process was 800 by 600 pixels at 72 pixels per inch.

• Tool Assessment

Before starting the actual development, many different animation software packages were evaluated and experimented with to measure appropriateness and functionality. Examples include Flash, Object Dancer, and Director.

• Create Motion Graphics

The individual line art, photos, and typography were created in Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. Then they were combined into motion graphics in After Effects. At this point the timing and duration of the clips were adjusted to best suit the most appropriate mood for each animation. Timing and duration decisions were

made with consideration of the target audience and for creating the most desiderable impact in each case.

• Graphics Manipulation

Various graphics manipulation effects, such as motion, scaling, blending, positioning, and object speed and typography were brought together to create supporting visual effects like tone changes from overlapping graphics, contrast, and focus.

• Video Clip Digitization

Short movie clips from BETA tape were digitized and edited in AVID. The videos were converted to Quicktime format and imported into After Effects. At this point various effects were blended such as lighting, 3D, and hue.

• Compression

The media composition (Media Composer 75) was compressed to a 29.97 frame rate following the NTSC standard size 720/486.

• Refine

Each particular movie clip was brought together into one long presentation. A blank screen was inserted between each clip and a "fade in/fade out" effect was used to transition from one clip to another.

• Sound

Upon completion of the video portion, audio was added and synchronized, being careful to match its personality with branding goals.

• Final Output

The Quicktime movie was converted to AVID, then to BETA, and then copied to VHS where it is presented on the television screen.

Conceptualization and Development

Each particular motion graphic had its own personality. Color, visual effects, typography, and other graphical elements were utilized to communicate the theme and traits of the brands they represent.

CNN

In creating an animation logo for CNN, there are certain themes and describers that should transfer to the video presentation. These include: comprehensive, dependable, accurate, important, serious, informative, international, and political.

The foundation of each animated logo is the "symbol" of the respective broadcast network. For CNN it would be the letters
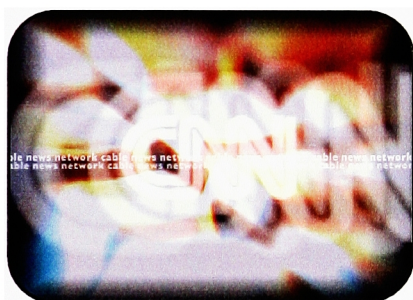
CNN in a distinctive font. The average person would find the logo for the Cable News Network familiar despite not knowing for what the letters CNN stand. This immediate recognition reflects the purpose of a logo. A consumer relates a product or company with the logo that represents it. A memorable logo contributes to name recognition and overall exposure. The motion graphic logo for CNN was enhanced to further contribute to these goals.

Some of the numerous enhancements to the original logo are: new images were combined with existing video; different versions of the CNN logo interact in a carefully orchestrated manner; the logos are of different sizes, reside on multiple transparent layers, and move in opposing directions with a variety of pace. This combination of the balance and variation of size and tone of typography creates a special harmony in the space surrounding each logo. These techniques were used to create an engaging view of the sophisticated image of CNN.

In building the CNN animation, the building blocks consisted of a still image created in Photoshop and a video clip of moving binary numbers. The variations of the still image (different size and layers) were imported into After Effects and integrated with another video clip and various filters to create the final motion video. After Effects was

used to create multiple video clips which were then transported to AVID in different stages with filtering and layering of each imported component.

After the integration of the various processes, a presentation combining dynamic visual tension and a visual strength of elements was created. Visual texturing and lighting effects were added to give it a more polished and complete look. After the visual component was completed, sound that identified with the corporate image was added to finish the overall presentation.

This sophisticated presentation accentuates the cosmopolitan and credible image that CNN has established. The polished look reinforces the comprehensive and serious image that CNN inherently exhibits.

ESPN

The tone of ESPN should also include a theme of being comprehensive and credible. However, ESPN deals with sports and sport is for entertainment. While news is more sober, sport is exciting and energetic. The image that ESPN conveys is one that is dynamic, vivid, passionate, energetic, and exciting. The broadcast logo should have the same

effect on the senses as an exciting sports event. Also, just as CNN is universally news, ESPN's image is the universe of sports.

In order to convey a universal image of sports, the center of the screen contains a sequence of photographs that depict various sports. This dynamic flow of pictures is uniform in size and is framed by a background of moving graphical design. Graphical elements provide a "sporting feel" to the animation. Lines and stripes are similar to those found in sporting brands and add to the feeling of ordered excitement. Small scores and different type further enhance the background to support the sports images in the center. At the end of the video the ESPN logo smoothly zooms out to a small size. This provides a smooth yet quick closing to the video true to the image of ESPN.

In every facet of sports, color is important. Uniforms, logos, and even stadiums are rich in color. In keeping with this color richness, energetic colors such as blue, yellow, and green were used to support the central image framed in white.
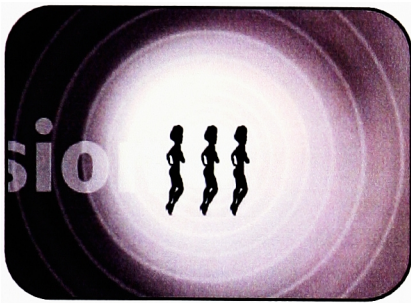
To support the rich color and exciting graphical elements, a dynamic and energetic music selection was made. This music had to keep pace with the visual excitement in the background of the ESPN logo animation.

MTV

MTV has always catered to the young. So in order to attract this youthful market, a youthful and energetic approach is necessary. Colorful, sexy, active, energetic, fast-paced, rhythmic, edgy, and x-generation are just some of the words that describe the theme MTV is putting forth.

Overall this logo animation has a slick, sharp, playful, and sexy look. The various graphical images are dynamic and are not limited by encumbering conventions. The letters "M" and "T" are large graphical elements that interact with MTV logos and words. These are freely displayed and are dynamically integrated with the background. The background contains shapes and line art that are arranged in a harmonious yet spontaneous form. These graphical elements perform various impulsive motions. Circles scale in size, shapes move in different directions, and colors are constantly changing to represent the excitement of music television. The sensual dancing icons illustrate a sexy image and add to the exciting appeal that MTV has built.

The overall presentation is brought together by filter and lighting effects that tie everything together into an exhi-

bition that represents the youthful, sexy image of MTV. The music that binds with this excitement maintains the energetic expression that is music video.

Sci-Fi

The Sci-Fi channel has a very specific appeal. The programming is different from mainstream media and has a mysterious quality to it. Science fiction indulges the innate curiosity in all of us. This indulgence is represented by words such as mysterious, explosive, futuristic, weird, and strange. Although there is a dark side to science fiction, an exciting and energetic side exists. This paradoxical and enigmatic subject matter, which builds up and climaxes, is represented in the full length of the logo animation.

The opening is a black background with an interjected light bar across the screen. Colorful three-dimensional words (science and fiction) come together from different directions. The background includes glossy white, blue, and black tones with a white circular glow in the middle of the screen. This contributes to the contrasting nature of science fiction–the impossible yet plausible.

Various visual effects including explosions and

heavenly bodies support the science fiction theme. These engaging effects are framed by black on the top and bottom of the screen that gives the animation a focused look. The visual effects are then synthesized with dynamic typography and lighting to give it a properly assimilated look.

After a complex medley of visual effects the animation stops with the text "Ever wonder?" on a clean white background. This mirrors the plot of many programs in science fiction. There is a period of wonder about the unknown where the plot builds momentum and attention, then there is a climax and disclosure. The climax is emphasized by the explosive music and the sudden appearance of the Sci-Fi logo enhanced via illumination, color intensification, and a zooming effect which gives it the appearance of approaching from space.

Throughout the animation, various effects are used to relate the foreign feel of science fiction. An array of lines blended with colorful backgrounds and typography contribute to the overall unconventional look.

In the process of developing the final presentation and during the research and experimentation period, certain facts came to light.

Animation is on a different creative level from that of static graphical design. Static graphical design is frozen in time and has limiting characteristics. John Halas discusses this issue in describing motion design:

"Unlike a static design which cannot change its shape, a moving design is capable of frequent changes. This experience provides a sense of liberation for the audience and an endless opportunity for the designer to develop his art in space and rhythm in a wider dimension." (Halas, p.12)

As the designer explores the wider dimensions of motion design, Halas notes a level of complexity:

"Moving graphics are subjected to a number of technical processes not inherent in static design such as an illustration, a poster, or a brochure. Consequently, an element of movement necessitates an understanding of film techniques, motion dynamics, motion mechanics and timing. All these factors inevitably multiply the production period of a static design, sometimes as much as ten times." (Halas, p.17)

Some fear change. This is unfortunately true in some places

where creative design plays a role. Many designers are too comfortable with their current set of tools and are hesitant to learn new ways of creating and new ways of building their products. They are afraid to broaden their scope in fear of losing their established "creative" practices. Some also do not learn to balance creative energy with technical understanding.

In producing the logo animation, an appreciation of balance and depth was acquired. Creative vision has to be balanced with the limits of the technical tools. If the mind is allowed to wonder without keeping in touch with the boundaries of feasibility, an unattainable project may be started. That is where experimentation and exploration with the available tools played a key role. Much of the brainstorming and creative visualization was done with the tools to keep the development grounded in reality.

Also a deep appreciation of the understanding of technical tools was developed. Every software application has its strengths and weaknesses. By becoming very familiar with each tool and making its use second nature, creative exploration was magnified and expedited by understanding where the limits were and where certain functionalities could enhance idea development. Just as a tennis player considers the racquet an extension of their hands due to constant use, the tools in a sense became an extension of the creative hand. By combining this proficiency, a balanced creative approach, an understanding of the commercial environment, and

years of multimedia experience, a final product with creative value,

polished presentation, and a solid commercial application resulted.

The final product was a culmination of many things. These include creative exploration, technical proficiency, knowledge of new media, a wide breadth of experience in the multimedia industry, and an understanding of the needs of the customer. Particularly, finding a balance between technology and creative vision played a key role. The two should not be separate tasks. Rather, creative vision and technology should be used in one integrated process to bring about the most value. This synergy leads to a more effective development process that includes higher quality, lower cost, and faster production.

Throughout the production of the logo animation video clips, many different tools were used. Different software packages had various strengths, and weaknesses. By focusing on the strengths of certain tools and mitigating the weaknesses of others through the use of a variety of tools in different stages, a balanced process that efficiently produced quality output was attained. This process allowed for another level of production. One should "Understand the technical implications of a new medium, work within the given limitations and at the same time break the rules that have not yet been fully established." (Brody & Hahn, P.9) This pioneering approach, which is grounded in technical expertise, is the foundation for the future of motion graphic design.

The ideas discussed are only the beginning. It is a foundation

from which new ideas and new vision in motion graphics can be launched. However, this pioneering spirit should not lead to new and exciting techniques just for the sake of using new technology. "We need to break up the old structure–as gentle as possible–and to leave space for new forms to grow within both new and traditional media."(Brody and Hahn p.10) The current explosion in new techniques and new media has created an exciting period in the multimedia graphic design and broadcast video production industry. Only by channelling this energy with the focus that comes from the realities of the real world, will the creative community truly move forward.

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