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PROMO

PATRICK DAUGHTERS

Two shots at magic for Feist

ADAM SMITH

Jamie T, Bob Hoskins and me

ONEDOTZERO

George Michael's cutting edge

SCROOBIUS PIP

Making a YouTube phenomenon

PLUS: Nima Nourizadeh, Ben Foley, Toben Seymour, Max & Dania, Minivegas, Price James



WILLOWZ
PRODUCTION:
 Commondeer Films;
 director: Toben
 Seymour; producer:
 Justin Benoliel; 1st
 AD: David Gelb; DP:
 Ross Riege;
 production
 designer: Matt

Lackie; animation
 supervisor: John
 Sweeney;
 POST: editor: Ryan
 Bartley
 LABEL: Dim Mak

Willowz

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NEW DIRECTOR 

So, exactly how *did* you do that?

Jubilee (Dim Mak)

Director: Toben Seymour

Toben Seymour says he likes to think big, regardless of budget. As the budgets of his videos have tended to be the opposite of big, that means he has to be extremely resourceful. But that's only part of the story.

Videos with that "how did they do that?" quality are rare - whatever the budget - yet Seymour has already made several like that. Like Herman Düne's I Wish That I Could See You Soon, in which a bunch of fuzzy letters bounce around a set, Sesame Street-style and children play on invisible playground rides. And Willowz' Cuts and Lies where singer Richie James Follin travels through a cartoon world, splits in half and keeps going.

But Seymour's most impressive work to date is his second video for Willowz, which has that "how did he do that?" factor in spades. The video for Jubilee is a combination of performance material and other vignettes, set in a variety of locations around Venice, CA, where the director is based. But what is extraordinary is how the large cast in the video interact with lines of light, and how the light becomes almost a living thing in various scenes.

Lights make patterns on a skyline, then become a figure shape skipping through the ocean, bloom into flowers, become a pelican, a fish, a fishing rod (held by a man) and when the band kick in they are surrounded by an explosion of light patterns. A woman dances with a man made of light, and on it goes.

In a variety of ways it's as if the real world is interacting with

another form of reality, and because the naturalistic, lo-fi nature of the footage is evidently 'real', the video appears to achieve the impossible. So how did Toben Seymour manage it? Some extremely complicated post effect?

Not so. "Most of my visual effects I like to do in-camera," says Seymour. "And this was no exception." He is co-founder of Commondeer Films with Ace Norton - who has now directed the next Willowz video - and Asiel Norton (they aren't related), who set up Commondeer to make low-budget videos while still studying film at USC. The fact Seymour also has experience in puppeteering is also significant, when you consider he is expert at manipulating images in real time.

In this case his means was a digital SLR. The video is actually comprised of animated stills and the secret of the video lies in the exposure times of shooting them. One of the secrets, that is.

Working with his cinematographer Ross Riege, Seymour established his technique, shooting each still on extremely long exposures - between eight and 20 seconds in length. And within this timeframe, and over each shot frame in the video, the director and a willing band of helpers literally painted with light: artist/animators, dressed in black, who are in each shot, creating light drawings.

"I had seven cameras going at once and a number of artists who drew in the frame, mainly using these LED lights we found in LA's toy district," Seymour explains. "It's basically animated light drawings."



Sweetness and light: Seymour shot each still with exposure times of between eight and 20 seconds in length

He continues: "We did a lot of tests beforehand. It got to a point where we could draw an angel and devil over my shoulders and then have them fighting." Then he found his artists via an animators website and gave them a quick seminar on the technique before the shoot.

The result are sequences of varying styles, much of it stunning, as when a woman dances, Fred and Ginger-style, with the man made of light, who finally gives her bottom a pinch. "Some animators were very good indeed," agrees Seymour. "That dancing shot took an hour to create. People assume it took months."

It actually took two days, plus pick up shots around Venice Beach. "Because we were working at the pace of making stop motion animation we had ideas whilst shooting," he says. "The dance sequence was pretty much improvised on the spot. I'm a big fan of creative freedom on set, and I also wanted to create a certain character with these lights, which develops over the video."

David Knight

Sophie Ellis-Bextor

Sophie Ellis-Bextor

Me And My Imagination (Fascination)

Director: Nima Nourizadeh

Equal parts Alice In Wonderland and Daft Punk, Partizan director Nima Nourizadeh's promo for Sophie Ellis-Bextor straddles the traditional and the modern with striking results. Shot at Black Island Studios, the video opens with an unremarkable street scene. Sophie pirouettes gracefully around lampposts and parking meters, skirting perilously close to the gutter.

As the song's bridge kicks in, the scene is transformed into a neon wonderland with fluorescent outlines on bland objects like post boxes.

By the chorus, she is joined by a troupe of similarly neon-aded dancers - with bright strips of primary colour along their limbs - a neon starshower, a flock of butterflies and a crown.

The cleverest moments of the video are in the transitions, such

Mutya Buena

Find it

Once a Sugar

Real Girl (Island)

Directors: Max & Dania

Topping everyone's favourite mean former Sugababe poll, Mutya Buena has done what any self-respecting pop princess would do when promoting her beguiling good looks and soulful R&B sensibilities: make a music video for her first solo outing that is more sassy than anything fellow ex-"babe Siobhan Donaghy can manage.

But Buena's game of oneupmanship doesn't end with some heavy-duty lip-gloss, a few dozen costume changes, mardy posturing and a cracking song. Not at all. Max and Dania's video for her debut single Real Girl is a visually sophisticated offering that is compounded by both moving images and frozen frames