

## Top Spot of the Week

## Directors Fx &amp; Mat Use The Power Of Olympic Athletes To Unite The World

By Christine Champagne

Olympic athletes are portrayed as larger-than-life heroes in a brilliant new animated spot for the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Created by Seattle's Cole & Weber United and directed by Fx & Mat, who are represented by London-based studio Nexus Productions, the :60 spot titled "All Together Now" finds six giant-sized athletes engaged in an epic tug of war, which ends with them literally pulling the continents together.

Running in some 120 countries worldwide, the commercial is primarily aimed at 12 to 19-year-olds, although anyone with an interest in animation would stop to watch "All Together Now," with its hyper-real style and amazing landscapes.

Explaining the thinking behind the spot, Cole & Weber senior writer Jacob Baas shared, "The International Olympic Committee noticed that there was a huge dip [in interest] between the summer and winter games, so what they challenged us to do was create messaging that kept kids involved in and excited about the Olympics in between the games."

Ultimately, the creative team at

Cole & Weber came up with the idea of the global tug of war we see depicted in "All Together Now," believing it would best depict and represent the Olympic values of excellence, friendship and respect.

Cole & Weber associate creative director/art director Scott Fero said that the ad agency kept the concept open and loose when they presented it to potential directors, and Fx & Mat came back with some great ideas.

For instance, Fero pointed out, it was Fx & Mat's idea to present the athletes as giants, which advanced the commercial's premise on different fronts.

Making the athletes giants served to make each one of them a symbol of his or her respective continent, and it also made sense in terms of the story being told, according to the directors, who noted it would take a gigantic strength to unify the continents.

## Fantastical scenarios

Additionally, the humongous athletes also allowed the directors to create some fantastical scenarios.

A prime case in point of the fantastical: The speed skater's head is seen

poking through the clouds at one point. Meanwhile, another athlete towers over Big Ben.

You'll notice that the athletes, all of whom are tugging on rope, don't move a lot. Fx & Mat assigned each of them a dynamic pose. To give the athletes more life in close-up shots, the directors gave each of them what they call "realistic eye movements," making sure their eyes were always moving abruptly.

In addition to the athletes, the continents are also characters in the commercial, and while you see recognizable monuments (Big Ben is seen in a stylized city meant to represent Europe), the directors strove to give a sense of each continent without promoting any particular country.

Furthermore, the athletes themselves were also designed to represent an entire continent as opposed to a particular country.

What Fero and Baas find particularly impressive about the finished product is the amount of detail.

"Every time we watch the commercial, it seems like there is another little thing we missed the previous time," Baas said.

"It's amazing the amount of detail that they have in there," Fero agreed, citing the fact that you can even see reflections in the chrome of the 3D cars that appear in the spot.

Adding small touches was really important to the directors, who reasoned that even if you don't notice each and every one, they all combine to give life to the shots.

Also, it was just plain fun to add all the special touches despite the fact that Fx & Mat and their team of 15 CG artists and composers were working on an extremely tight time schedule—the production process took about two and a half months.

Incidentally, one of the little details had to be tweaked at the last minute. The directors had inserted an African buffalo into a frame, then realized it looked more like a bison.

During the final week of production, they went in and added horns to the creature, resulting in what was a more accurate representation of an African buffalo.

## A major score

While the animation had to be done on a tight timeframe, it was the creation of the music for "All Together Now" that proved the most challenging part of the process, according to Fero and Baas.

"We wanted something univer-

sal. We wanted to make sure it didn't sound like it was from a certain region, and it needed to be scored," Fero said.

London-based music company Brains & Hunch delivered an orchestral piece which relied on traditional instruments like brass and strings but was at the same time infused with synthesized sounds creating what Baas described as being "an orchestral piece that feels really modern."

Susan Stone, owner/creative director of London's Tonic, produced the music, collaborating with Brains & Hunch composers Christopher Branch and Tom Haines.

"The complex animation needed talented composers like Tom and Chris who were experienced with animation, who could really envisage the story before it was visually there," Stone said, noting, "Because the job was so high-profile and the production spread across three countries, it was essential that the entire team worked closely together through the whole project, as opposed to dealing with the music at the end of the job."

"It was challenging to get the music just right," continued Tonic's Stone, "but working intimately as a team closely alongside the production made all the difference."



Fx &amp; Mat



Cole & Weber, Seattle, and directors Fx & Mat of Nexus Productions teamed on the daunting task of bringing continents together for client the IOC. The creative means towards that end was an animated spot depicting a momentous tug of war among world-class athletes who are literally giants.

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## CLIENT

International Olympic Committee (IOC).

## AGENCY

Cole & Weber United, Seattle.

Todd Grant, executive creative director; Scott Fero, associate creative director/art director; Jacob Baas, senior copywriter; Greg Lane, copywriter; Pete Anderson, executive producer/broadcast producer.

## PRODUCTION COMPANY

Nexus Productions, London.

Fx & Mat, directors; Charlotte Bavasso, Christopher O'Reilly, executive producers; Julia Parfitt, head of production; David Fleet, project lead.

## MUSIC

Brains & Hunch, London.

Christopher Branch, Tom Haines, composers.

Tonic Music Ltd., London.

Susan Stone, owner/creative director/producer.

## AUDIO

Wave, London.

Stuart Welch, sound designer/mixer.