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IBC Digital

By [Colin Campbell](#)
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IBC Digital president Ben Porcari lifts the curtain on MTV2's Video Mods production secrets and explains how to get your games considered for placement.



MTV2's Video Mods is a relatively new series where game characters and in-game art are used to create brand new music videos for today's hits. For publishers and developers, it should be seen as an opportune way to tap in to MTV2's audience, which overlaps with a portion of our industry's core target demographic.

The team at IBC Digital works with MTV2 and SUNY Buffalo to create each episode. Several have been aired already with more being developed as we speak. The most recent episode airs tonight, September 30, 2005 and will feature X-Men Legends: ROTA, Juiced, Dungeon Lords and DDR.

Game Selection

We were curious about the placement and selection of games that get the Mod treatment and what we learned may surprise you. First of all, none of these games have paid for placement. "In some cases publishers approach MTV directly with a game to be covered. In other cases MTV will approach a developer with the opportunity," says Porcari. "The [publishers and developers] that have done the show tend to want to continue doing the show because it works really well in terms of giving people a look at what's coming down the line. It's totally win-win."

The Creative Process

"Our process breaks down in a few layers," says Porcari. "First there's a creative pass in which once a game and song are paired, we look at the lyrics of the song and the content of the game and work up a treatment for the video. It's a brand new concept for a video tailored to bring out the best in both components."

Approvals

When asked about approval issues, given that some of these games have multiple stake-holders (say, a licensor for example) Porcari explains "When we develop these initial concepts, we get approval on direction from all concerned parties. When the developer, MTV and anyone else who needs to approve it says it's good, we move on. As we move forward and we do rough cuts,

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More details are emerging about the financial deal to bring Peter Jackson on board as exec producer of the Halo movie



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animatics, story boards and render tests which are all passed down the line for everyone to see. We want everyone to be happy with the end product, and if there are a few changes that need to happen, we do what we can to oblige."

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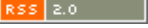
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Asset Collection

The team at IBC Digital works directly with development teams on the collection of assets. "Assets we get sent run the gamut as far as format goes. We work in Maya so sometimes we're lucky and we'll get sent fully rigged and weighted characters," explains Porcari. "Other times we'll have to convert them or the developers will help us with that. It's often a mixed bag. When we're able to get the rigged and weighted characters in Maya initially, that allows us to focus more on the creative process rather than redoing blend shapes and re-weighting.

"Once everyone is on the same page with the video concept, we get or generate all of the assets we need. Sometimes we have to build environments or props. Some Video Mods are done entirely with characters, backgrounds and props created by the developer.

"When it all looks good, we'll then do motion capture. Based upon the treatment we created, we shoot all of the scenes and then import the data and apply them to the characters. We do a lot of animatics and story boards and cut them to the song, so we have a shot by shot breakdown and understanding of the pacing.

"When everything is done, we go through the process of lighting, rendering and visual effects. For example, the show that airs September 30th, we had Magneto from X-Men Legends playing the drums using his magnetic powers. So there's this orb of magnetic energy with all sorts of sparks and the drums are getting hit by these boomerang things. That effect is like eight layers just for the bubble. So we have a lot of visual effects and compositing that needs to be done in every scene."

The SUNY Supercomputing Connection

"To make this happen, we've partnered with the supercomputing center at SUNY Buffalo. What that gives us is access to a 2,000 processor machine for rendering that's roughly 1/3rd as powerful as Dreamworks' render farm.

"Our Star Wars Video Mod was a 30,000 hour render that we cranked out in a couple days. In most cases we can get back an entire video rendered in the same day. It allows us to sometimes re-render a video two or three times to get it perfect. Without that partnership we wouldn't be able to get the look of the show where it's at right now and they've been amazing to work with."

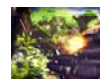
Start to finish, a complete episode of Video Mods takes about seven weeks to pull together.

If you're a developer or publisher and you're interested in exploring opportunities for your franchises on Video Mods, you can contact executive producer, Alex Coletti at alex.coletti@mtvstaff.com.

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