

# METROBUS ON ROUTE ENTERTAINMENT

**M**etrobus are a new force in Bangkok's hectic transport industry. With a new fleet of 1000 gleaming white buses, their mission was 'to bring humanity back to bus travel'. E&P Associates were brought in to create the branding for their on-board information and entertainment system, On Route Entertainment. The brand and the fleet went into action in April 2009.

The idents had to embody Metrobus's promise, 'It's a good jam'. The situation was a unique one. On board a bus, the viewers are passengers with no opportunity to change channel or switch off the TV. The project called for brand loyalty to be created in a subtle, calm manner to make the viewers feel comfortable and stress free.

Designer/director Ben Marshall says, "Our concept was to create a series of panoramic landscapes filled with dreamlike, almost magical, imagery. We wanted to transport the passengers away from their journey – anyone who has travelled in Bangkok knows that the traffic can be formidable, with buses regularly sitting for long periods of time in jams."

"We envisioned one continuous camera movement with no cuts, a seamless pan, mimicking the movement of the bus, as if the viewer has momentarily looked outside the window to find themselves somewhere else entirely – lifted above the bustling streets to an idyllic place, free of blaring horns and exhaust fumes."

"We created three dream landscapes that vary in mood, to avoid being repetitive – in such a closed environment this would have been disastrous. The 'Kites' ident is bright and energetic, with colourful kites soaring against a cloudless blue sky. The 'Windmills' ident is more sedate, the camera tracking through a landscape of graceful windmills. The 'Lanterns' ident is more relaxing – we watch hundreds of paper lanterns float up into an evening sky," Marshall said.

The original intention was to film all the separate elements against bluescreen, but this proved to be prohibitive, not allowing a satisfactory degree of control over the movement of the objects. The challenge was then to create CG that looked every bit as real as the real thing.

"The challenge was to get the right balance between direct and indirect light i.e. front lighting and back lighting," said Sean Elliot, head of animation, Golden Square. "To achieve this quality the right amount of 'refraction blur' i.e. defocusing of the background as seen through the material, was balanced with a slight colour variation for the translucent light."

"Apart from the essential colour textures for the kites and sails, the subtleties of the material needed to be described by textures for shininess, bump, transparency of stitches, seams and different coloured panels."

"To get the kites' movement spot-on, we spent some time studying

video of kite festivals from around the world. We focused first on recreating the ambient movement against the wind, getting the feel of slight random variations in speed and direction, gusts and flurries. Once we were happy with the passive influences we turned our attention to the active influences i.e. input from the kite fliers through the strings," Elliot added.

"We decided during early conversations with Rob and Ben of E&P to use live action or photography for the backgrounds. We dedicated time early on in the project to looking through many images and sequences of skies. Nothing we found fitted the bill perfectly, so we manipulated the closest match to create the composition we wanted."

"Another contributing technique we used is depth cueing. The real world effect we're reproducing is that of atmospheric fogging whereby objects further away subtly fade into the background. This increases realism and helps to separate elements in the Z direction i.e. in and out of the picture, especially helpful for overlapping elements and overall makes the image easier on the eye and more pleasant to take in. The modelling and animation was done in Maya, and compositing in Flame."

"To the same end, we used a wide angle lens as this increases the difference in size between objects near and far away from camera, and in turn increases the perceived depth of the image. Also the wide lens enables us to see a greater area of sky, effectively placing the audience point of view at a small scale relative to the image and enhancing the perception of space."

"The music was specially composed to reflect the subtle changes of mood across the three idents. All share the same signature On Route melody, but

the layers are built up or stripped down depending on the ident. All the tracks were engineered by comparing them to audio waveforms from recordings of the buses' engine noise, so as to be audible even whilst on the move," Elliot added.

Rob Machin, creative director explains, "we worked very closely with the local strategic and creative agency Brand Connections, to ensure there was maximum cultural integration as well as technical continuity with locally produced programme promotions"

Narumon Boontawekit, managing partner of Brand Connections Bangkok, says, "the brand work that E&P Associates have created truly captures the emotive ideas and subtle visuals that appeal to Bangkok residents. This, combined with the international quality look and feel, sets a new standard for Thailand's media arena"

This project re-enforces E&P's strong long term relationship with the Thai media and television market whilst continuing to grow its expertise throughout the Pan-Asian region. ASIAIMAGE

## CREDITS

**Client:** The Premier Group  
Metrobus / Brand Connections,  
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**Production/Design Agency:**  
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Director), Ben Marshall (Director /  
Designer)

**Animation/Vfx:**  
Golden Sq. London  
Gil James / Bryony Harrison  
(Producer), Sean Elliot (Animator)

**Music:** Adelphoi, London  
Greg Moore (Producer),  
Steve Patman (Composer)

