



PRODUCTION IN REVIEW

Official newsletter of the AFIeTV Workshop

SAVE THE DATE

The 2003 AFI eTV production cycle culminates on Tuesday, December 2 on AFI's Los Angeles campus with an invitation-only premiere of the Workshop's eight prototypes. Production team members are required to attend. Erin Flood will be speaking with teams about demo set-up arrangements. Be on the lookout for online registration information, coming soon to your inbox.

UPCOMING EVENTS

AFI at the Western Show: AFI will be demonstrating eTV Workshop prototypes at CableLabs' CableNET '03 exhibit at the Western Show in Anaheim, CA on December 3-5. For more information, visit www.cablenet.org.

AFI hosts Digital Coast Roundtable Meeting: The Digital Coast Roundtable will hold their next meeting on AFI's campus on November 11. Several 2003 eTV Workshop team members will present their works in progress. There are limited spaces available for members of the eTV community. For information about attending this event, please email Amy Knobler at aknobler@afi.com.

JOIN AFI

For as little as \$50, enjoy a host of AFI member benefits including access to the online AFI Catalog of Feature Films, ticket discounts, AFI's online newsletter and more.

Visit www.AFI.com/membership today and help support the advancement and preservation of the moving image.

PRODUCTION TEAMS IN FOCUS

In October, the production teams showed their works in progress at the annual Design Roundtables, a significant milestone in the production process. Fellow Workshop participants and members of the eTV community provided feedback to each production team as they close in on final design iterations and embark on their applications' development and integration.

BLOOMBERG TELEVISION: One of the key strengths BLOOMBERG brings to their team is a vast library of VOD content – an asset the team plans to leverage on the virtual channel component of their prototype. The team recently overcame a major hurdle involving the viewer's access to this content. Originally, there was no trigger to directly link the viewer from the BLOOMBERG enhanced TV experience to the BLOOMBERG virtual channel VOD offerings, requiring the viewer to physically change the channel to access the VOD. Zetools and Microsoft discovered a workaround involving an ad server. From within the enhanced experience, the viewer simply clicks a link to the ad server, and the server takes them directly to the virtual channel. This workaround allows the team to provide a seamless transition, keeping the viewer immersed in the BLOOMBERG world and ultimately delivering a more unified user experience.



David Jensen and Richard Cardran of Zetools present BLOOMBERG's eTV Workshop prototype in progress at the Design Roundtable in New York.



PRODUCTION IN REVIEW

Official newsletter of the AFI eTV Workshop



Shelly Palmer and J.R. Grant of ABC and John Canning (middle) of Microsoft discuss ABC's *CELEBRITY MOLE II* eTV Workshop prototype with the audience at the Design Roundtable in New York.

PRODUCTION TEAMS IN FOCUS (continued):

CELEBRITY MOLE II (ABC): This team welcomes some additional mentor manpower: Funny Garbage will lead the next round of design, while Zetools, also a mentor on the BLOOMBERG team, will head up coding and integration. The team has fleshed out designs for the UI, including the Mole-o-Meter, a polling module featuring each celebrity's face. Viewers can click on the faces to vote on each celebrity's "Mole/Not Mole" status and compare their votes with others. The team is also incorporating a Flash window with dynamic content that is triggered at various points in the show. When triggered, it features a clue to the Mole's identity in the form of a quiz, poll or trivia question. When this window is in a static mode, it would offer additional information about each celebrity as the viewer rolls over their photos on the Mole-o-Meter. The team has also been discussing screen resolution issues relating to the Windows MCE platform. They need to determine the best resolution to assume in designing the enhanced experience, but this is challenging because viewers use their MCE PCs in different ways: as a TV, as a PC, some leaning forward, some leaning back. Because there is no standard configuration, the team determined they would design the experience for 1024 x 768 screen resolution, the average for a PC, and the resolution recommended by Microsoft's MCE tech team, assuring that most viewers would be able to interact without needing to modify their system's configuration.

KIM POSSIBLE (Disney Channel): The team has been tweaking UI designs and fleshing out the rules of the KIM POSSIBLE trading card game. A key design issue discussed during the Design Roundtable involved the on-screen cursor graphic the viewer will use to select hidden trading cards. Using the spy-like design element of KIM POSSIBLE's logo, the initial

cursor design looked like the crosshairs from a rifle. While the crosshairs seemed inconsequential within the context of the linear show - a non-violent kids' show - the audience at the Roundtable felt the crosshair cursor in the interactive mode might present the wrong message to kids if taken out of context. The team redesigned the cursor to look more like a camera lens, still in keeping with the espionage theme. The team is also streamlining their navigation. Earlier UI designs featured various navigation paths from screen to screen, which might prove confusing to kids. They are redesigning some of the screens so the entire enhanced experience has a parallel structure. The next step for the team involves testing the application in a simulator that demonstrates the game play experience for many players simultaneously. This will allow the team to create the game's parameters, such as which cards are most rare and how frequently certain cards appear in the game.

REDSKINS GAME DAY (Washington Redskins): The team's initial challenge was creating a REDSKINS application that's all things to all fans, and their solution involves implementing user-specific skins overlaying the broadcast. The concept of skins enables the team to deliver the same interactive content from a single database in a way that's meaningful to the end user, whether a stats enthusiast or a kid interested in football. Designing multiple skins actually means designing multiple UIs within one application, so the team is tackling how to design their "all things to all fans" application in a way that's both simple for the show producer to manage and intuitive for the user to navigate. On the backend, the team needs to standardize the administration of the app so a producer need only work with one set of data for all skins. From a user perspective, the team is working through standardizing the unique interfaces. While the die-hard fan's skin might be text-heavy with facts and figures, the kid's skin will be more visual and less dependent on reading text. Both skins should navigate the same way, however, so any viewer could use any skin. The team is looking forward to exploring user-testing opportunities.

INDEPENDENT LENS (PBS): During the Design Roundtables, the INDEPENDENT LENS team received feedback that addressed the heart of their entire interactive concept. The audience felt the application could do more to represent the community of independent filmmakers who are the key focus of the series itself. The original navigation featured a hierarchy where the film directors were less prominent than other enhanced features. Based on the feedback they received, the team derived a new information architecture, now featuring the filmmakers as the anchor that holds the experience together. The team revised the UI designs using images of the directors as a navigational system, driving home the concept that INDEPENDENT LENS is a community of filmmakers speaking on common issues, not just a collection of independent films. Additionally, the team is challenged with distilling the films' complex, often serious subject matter into minimal text description. The new designs include more video within the navigation to allow the power of the films to speak for themselves.



PRODUCTION IN REVIEW

Official newsletter of the AFI eTV Workshop

PRODUCTION TEAMS IN FOCUS (continued):

IMX (Fuse): By nature, the IMX game's stock trading features involve a great volume of data available to the viewer. The team wants to be cognizant of the record labels' desire to keep overlays on videos to a minimum, but they need to provide viewers the necessary depth of information for compelling game play. They've found a solution surrounding one of the most data-heavy game features, the IMO (Initial Music Offering). Initial UI designs featured the "Info" screen with an overlay covering the lower third of full screen video, offering IMO trading figures on a band. Another button, "Mo Info," pushed back the video to 1/4 screen and offered deeper band info. The team knows their "SMS generation" audience is comfortable with the picture-in-picture concept, so they determined it would be more intuitive to utilize the 1/4-screen window more extensively. They reconfigured their navigation, combining "Info" and "Mo Info" into a single screen featuring 1/4 screen video throughout the IMO trade experience. This allows them to manage the text-intensive UI design while still maintaining the integrity of the music video.

PBS Pledge (KQED and KCET): The team has welcomed Phillip Dunn, Producer of New Media for KCET, as KCET's new lead design mentor. KCET has made significant revisions to their design concepts as a result of feedback gleaned from the Design Roundtable. The initial UI designs for their programming-based fundraising application featured show-specific thematic elements, such as background images of musicians from PBS' MARIACHI: SPIRIT OF MEXICO. But because this application will always be available to viewers, the team determined their UI should be less tied to the show's theme and more reflective of KCET's new station branding. This change creates a more streamlined, less confusing interface for the user, while reinforcing KCET's identity, and ultimately, uses far less bandwidth than unique, show-specific graphics would require. Vidiom has begun building out KQED's enhanced pledge break application, pushing the limits of the OCAP standard. KQED's UI design features a full-screen, semi-transparent animated

graphic that glides up from the menu bar in the lower third to the top of the screen, allowing the background video to bleed through underneath. Implementing this effect, called an animated alpha, is a very CPU-intensive process, but the team's UI designs were created with versatility and efficiency in mind. If the animated alpha is too CPU-intensive to implement, the team has plans for an alternate animation scheme with the same graphics, where the lower third menu bar will snap to the top of the screen instead.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA (SCI FI Channel and VU Games): The team has fleshed out the designs for BATTLESTAR GALACTICA's spatial navigation on the Xbox. The interface features directional mapping composed of four quadrants, each offering a different interactive opportunity for the viewer. Navigating to the left, viewers can get a closer glimpse at the artifacts of the scene they're watching by viewing maps and diagrams relevant to the storyline, giving viewers a deeper sense of immersion in the story. When viewers navigate to the right, they find visual background on the BATTLESTAR GALACTICA characters through access to character photos and "home movies." Navigating up, viewers have access to additional B-roll footage, and moving down, viewers have an opportunity to participate in the story through interactive game play, flying aircrafts in battle along with the show's characters.

eTV WORKSHOP ALUM WINS NATAS EMMY AWARD

The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences announced the winners for the first-ever Advanced Media Technology Emmy Awards, honoring achievement in the technical enablement of iTV. One Emmy was awarded to past eTV Workshop mentor Cablevision for their iO Interactive Optimum Digital Cable Service, and the second Emmy went to NASCAR.COM'S PITCOMMAND. Congratulations!

TALK TO US!

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? E-mail us at enhancedtv@AFI.com.

The AFI eTV Workshop is grateful for the support of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Microsoft Corporation, Liberate Technologies and Comcast Media Center.

The material contained in this newsletter may not be forwarded or reproduced without permission from the AFI eTV Workshop.