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>> COMMUNITY NEWS

Synthetic Pictures' Scott Rice Directs Spot for Shell Mastercard

January 3
<http://www.syntheticpictures.com/>

A man pumping gas learns about an exceptional rebate offer from Shell MasterCard from a most unusual source -- the rebate itself -- in a deadpan comedy spot from JWT/Houston directed by Scott Rice, the most recent addition to U.S.- based Synthetic Pictures' roster of talent.



Attack of the 35c rebates

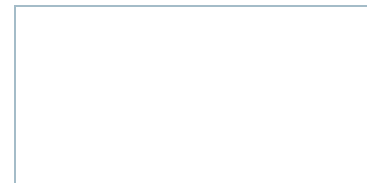
"Yellow Boxes" marks Rice's directing debut with Synthetic Pictures. It epitomizes one of the genres at which Rice excels, "contemporary comedy drawn from deadpan performances and absurd situations," says the production company's executive producer Justin Corsbie. "I'm interested in having people react in very normal ways to very absurd things," agrees Rice. "The juxtaposition tends to be comical."

In "Yellow Boxes," a man is pumping gas when he hears a voice say, "Hey!" He looks around and doesn't notice anyone until the voice says, "Down here." The man looks down to find a bright yellow cube with 35¢ printed on its front, arms and hands with white gloves sticking out the sides of the cube and legs with quirky red shoes sticking out the bottom.

The hero cube tells the man to "apply now and get a Shell MasterCard, and I'll be your 15% rebate: That's 35¢ a gallon at \$ 2.35 a gallon." Another man at a gas pump looks on quizzically as the cube goes on to say the rebate is good for the cardholder's first 60 days. "Just imagine all the rebates," he points out as dozens of yellow cubes run into the Shell station from the distance. The spot ends with the man having filled his gas tank and slamming the door on his car crammed full of cubes. A hand protrudes from the side window and corners of cubes and an arm stick out of the sunroof.

Rice initially planned to have a little person play the role of the hero cube. A casting call drew 40 little people and four were selected. But once one of them got into the cube costume -- made of reinforced foam covered with fabric dyed Shell's signature yellow -- the director realized the box would not allow the man's arms to protrude and gesture.

"The hero cube needed to be expressive," says Rice. So he donned the costume himself and determined that the solution was to cast a normal-sized person, whose arms were long enough to extend and gesture, and have him play the part seated on a chair. Scrunched into the costume and sitting on a bluescreen chair that could later be removed in post, the actor would appear small when shot from a high angle.



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To depict the comic onrushing rebates, four little people -- wearing cube costumes with fake arms -- were shot in multiple passes in different positions running to camera. The passes were composited, and additional cubes were cloned, to create the crowd in post. "The little people were real pros," notes Rice. "There were no eye holes in the costumes so they were flying blind."

For the car filled with rebates some little people were used along with empty costumes whose arms were moved with monofilament.

Additional post effects were required for the 35¢ graphics. During the day-long 35mm shoot it was not yet determined if the rebate figure would be 35, 38 or 33 cents. The 35¢ figure was printed on the hero costume; plates of additional costumes bearing the other numbers were shot in case the figure needed to be replaced. The signs above the gas pumps with the rebate amount were entirely composited into shots.

"Scott was remarkable -- nothing ever fazed him" as challenges arose and Rice went into the problem-solving mode, notes Corsbie.

"It was a fun, wonderful collaboration with the agency," says Rice. "We were really on the same page from day one."

"We really enjoyed working with Scott and Justin," adds Leigh Anne Bishop, director of creative services at JWT/Houston. "They did a great job of bringing our little rebate guys to life. And Shell and Citi were very pleased with the final picture."

About Synthetic Pictures

Synthetic Pictures is an award-winning production company with a diverse roster of directors specializing in the production of TV commercials, music videos and filmed entertainment. Based in Austin, Texas - with satellite production offices in New York and LA – it provides clients with strong, first-string support services in all three cities. The caliber of Synthetic's talent and production services has attracted a long list of prestigious clients, including Wal-Mart, DreamWorks, Reebok, Champs Sports, Southwest Airlines, Miracle-gro, American Heart Association, Hewlett-Packard, Fudruckers and the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

For additional information go to www.syntheticpictures.com or call 1.800.535.3033.

CREDITS: Project: Shell MasterCard "Yellow Boxes" (1x :30)

Agency: JWT/Houston: Senior Copywriter: Mark Schildberg, Art Director/Associate Creative Director: Greg Kewekordes, Associate Creative Director: Josh Bishop, Producer/Director of Creative Services: Leigh Anne Bishop

Account Supervisor: Julie Price.

Production Co: Synthetic Pictures/LA/NY/Austin: Director: Scott Rice, DP: Robert Benavides, Executive Producer: Justin Corsbie, Producers: Jacquie Frisco, Billy Parks. (Location: Shell station, LA. Stock Footage Company: None)

Editorial Co: TvMan/Houston, Editor: Don Sattler.

Post Facility: TvMan/Houston, Visual Fx Artist: Don Sattler.

Transfer Co: Encore/LA Colorist: Laura Jans-Fazio.

*Audio Post: Speed of Sound/Houston, Engineers: Matt Manning, John Joiner
Music & Sound Design: None.*

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