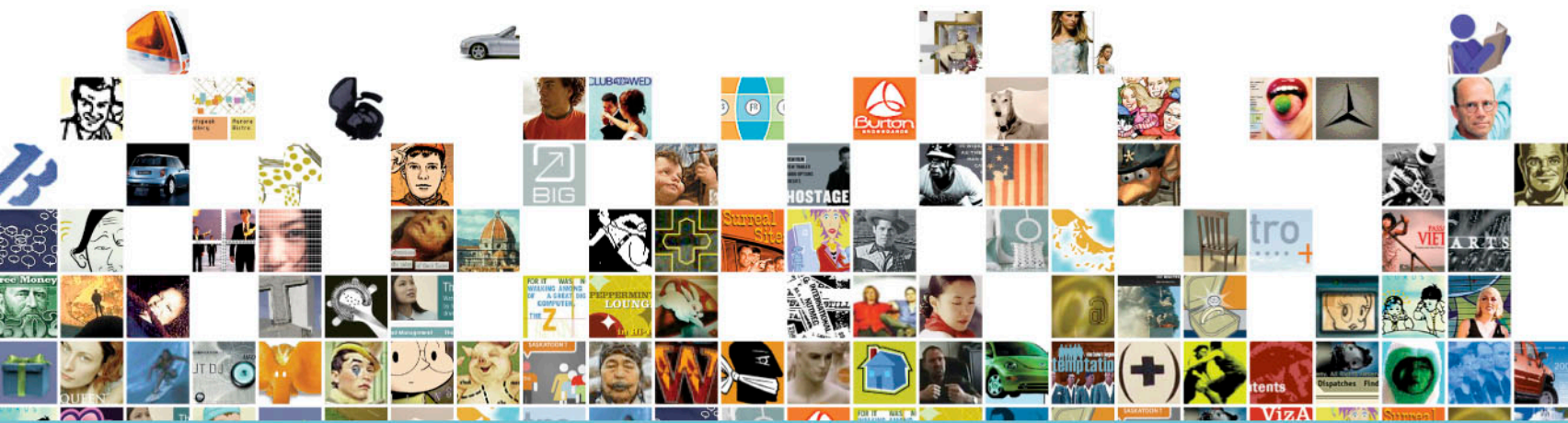


Interactive Annual 10

Communication Arts



10 YEARS OF INTERACTIVITY



September/October 2004

Sixteen Dollars

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Experimenting in a Basement

Huey/Paprocki

by Matthew Porter

A basement is a fine place to start out. It's inexpensive. Exposed plumbing offers its own aesthetic. Peddlers don't bother you. But if you're still there years later, you might want to rewrite your business plan, right? Well, no. Take Huey/Paprocki for example. Their seven-year basement experiment in advertising has produced a formula for success.

From the outset Ron Huey and Joe Paprocki, co-creative directors, made compelling, highly creative work their mission. It started in 1997 at Joe's house. Eighteen months later, they moved from Joe's dining room to the former ballroom of a 1920s-era hotel that had gone from grand to bad to worse to much, much better. The hotel is located in one of Atlanta's coolest, funkier neighborhoods—Poncey/Highlands, where families, DINKS, Guppies, Buppies, Skinheads, runaways and strippers share the streets.

The below-ground space once hummed as a speakeasy, a ballroom and a single bowling lane before starting a long decline that mirrored the exhausted fortunes of the surrounding neighborhood. But things began to change in the mid-'80s. Hookers and pushers left. Young couples, gays and lesbians moved in and began refurbishing apartments and homes. Then came coffee shops, bike shops, book stores, restaurants. Prices rose. New owners came to the hotel, burned the old sheets, added the word "inn" and made it into a respectable B&B. In 1999, Joe and Ron stepped into this milieu.

Up and Out

Ron Huey, copywriter, grew up in Winder, Georgia, about 40 miles northeast of Atlanta. After graduating from the University of Georgia in Athens in 1983, he spent two years as an account executive at J. Walter Thompson/Atlanta, then worked at a smaller firm where he diversified his skills and began copywriting. But Atlanta didn't offer the kind of growth experiences he desired. So in 1990, he left for Los Angeles to work for Saatchi & Saatchi's Team One Advertising. There, Ron's work on Lexus established him as a force in the business. His reputation spread. In 1993, The Martin Agency in Richmond, Virginia, offered him the keys to their Mercedes-Benz account. As Ron put it then, "Time to trade in the Lexus."

Joe Paprocki, art director, grew up in Lakeland, Florida, where cars also shaped his career. "I trained to be an auto mechanic. It didn't take too many burned fingers to realize I might be better suited for something else." He went to Florida State University in Tallahassee where he earned a degree in Visual Communications before moving to Atlanta.

After a stint at Cargill, Wilson & Acree, Joe's work was solid, but he was not finding the career-building opportunities he wanted. So Joe also decided the best way to move up was to move out—in 1992 to Minneapolis to work for Fallon McElligott. His work there, for Purina, Nikon, Family Life and Lee Jeans, was featured in all the leading annuals.

Look Homeward

Thomas Wolfe, of course, was wrong. You can go home again: if you've earned enough credit and experience to set yourself apart in a dimly-lit market. In 1996, Ron and Joe returned to Atlanta. "Coming back was always part of our grand plan," says Ron. "Joe took a job as creative director at Ogilvy & Mather. I came to Atlanta to open an agency. It was something Joe and I had discussed for years. It didn't happen by chance."

Unless otherwise noted, both Ron Huey and Joe Paprocki were the creative directors on all projects.

Right: "Magazine ad for the Atlanta History Center. Museums tend to be stuffy by definition. A bunch of blue-haired old ladies. A perception that keeps many visitors away. This humorous headline communicated the craftsmanship of these colonial antiques, while also proving the Atlanta History Center does indeed have a pulse," said Ron Huey. Scot Crooker, art director; Chris Dutton, writer.

"Magazine ad for Mizuno Golf, USA. Golfers will do crazy things. For Mizuno, we wanted to demonstrate that we understand that," said Ron Huey. "By doing so, more golfers are putting Mizuno on their consideration list and club sales are up fifteen percent in the first two quarters of 2004." Scot Crooker, art director; Chris Dutton, writer; Andrew Martin, photographer.

"Do It Yourself Network is a sister network to HGTV in Knoxville. With thousands of how-to projects online and on air, it caters to the hardcore do-it-yourselfer. Here, we wanted to convey the depth and breadth of programming in a fun, memorable way without actually having to list every single project," said creative director Joe Paprocki. "If you look closely, you can see where the chair has begun to give way." Scot Crooker, art director; Chris Dutton, writer; Andrew Martin, photographer.

Furniture of the American South: The first traveling exhibition Colonial Williamsburg has produced from their permanent collection of antique Southern furniture. March 19th - August 18th, 2002



BACK *before* ROCKET SCIENCE PEOPLE WOULD SAY, "IT *ain't* FURNITURE MAKING."


See more than 50 pieces of Colonial Williamsburg furniture that illustrate the taste and cultural diversity of the early South. Opening day events will also introduce guests to the cultural activities of early Southern furniture makers, including live musical performances and interactive crafts for the kids. So pull up a chair and enjoy the finer things of someone else's life.




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YOUR PASSION IS OUR OBSESSION. Whether in tight sand or thick Bermuda, nowhere is feel more important than your wedge game. And nothing feels quite like the Mizuno RBW Black On™. Its finish helps maximize spin for pinpoint accuracy, while its lie responsive sole lets you to hit the ball from virtually any lie.

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Episode: DIG-120

• **CURING NAUSEA** •
Episode: TUW-105

• **SELLING YOUR HOME** •
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• WATCH. CLICK. PRINT. GET. •

Huey/Paprocki

By early 2001, *Advertising Age* included Huey/Paprocki in its list of “20 Creative Agencies to Watch,” stating, “[e]ver since it opened its doors in 1997, Huey/Paprocki has dominated the Atlanta Addy’s, bringing home more medals than any other agency.” Either Atlanta advertising was that bad, or Huey/Paprocki was that good. Two years later, 72 of 76 Huey/Paprocki submissions garnered awards at ShowSouth. In 2004, they again took away more awards than any ShowSouth participant.

But local success is not the standard against which this group measures itself. “We like winning locally, regionally,” says Joe, “but our goal is to go up against the world’s best and win.” And they’ve done so, consistently appearing in *Archive*, *Communication Arts* and *The One Show*, year after year.

Huey/Paprocki has established itself as one of, if not the, pre-eminent creative shop in Atlanta. So what’s the secret to their success? Well, it sure ain’t the fancy office. The answer, as usual, is simple: hard work, trust, loyalty, respect and sharing credit.

“It starts with talent. But after that, it’s about listening and responding to what a client has to say. When you do that, you build trust, and trust is the basis from which clients allow their agency to do great, leading work,” says Robyn Ulrich, VP of marketing, Do It Yourself Network. “While we have grown from 5 million households to 25 million since we began with Huey/Paprocki, what has not changed is the fact that either Joe or Ron come to every meeting and return every phone call. They don’t treat us like clients—they treat us as partners.”

The Sane Asylum

Today, Huey/Paprocki’s staff works in the old ballroom’s open, shabby-chic space. It is an office without walls. To meet, one need merely roll their chair across the cracked terrazzo floor and start talking. It is an egalitarian, informal atmosphere. What keeps talented people coming to the place is the same thing that motivated Joe and Ron years before: if you work at a hot shop, you get career-enhancing opportunities and a great book which is, in turn, a ticket to a fulfilling career. Ron and Joe encourage the people around them to grow. That some (or most) will leave one day is a given. Rather than fight the inevitable, they nurture it, getting the best out of folks in the time they are there.

Bob Cianfrone, copywriter at Crispin Porter + Bogusky in Miami says he benefited from his years at Huey/Paprocki. “Ron and Joe only wanted good things for me. They put me into a position where that could happen. When I showed my



© Pat Molnar

book here, 99% of my work was done in the two years I spent with those guys. They’re selfless.”

Paul Crawford, a former Huey/Paprocki staffer and now creative director at Lewis Communications in Birmingham, notes how good Ron and Joe are at setting priorities. “With all their notoriety I expected to walk into some nice office with a bunch of people,” he recalls. “Instead, there were three guys standing around in shorts and T-shirts. I was like, ‘What is this, some kind of weird science project?’ Well, it was, in a way. It was advertising broken down to its most basic components. No useless meetings. No extraneous staff. No fancy office space. We did tons of work, we did it efficiently and we all got home at sane hours.”

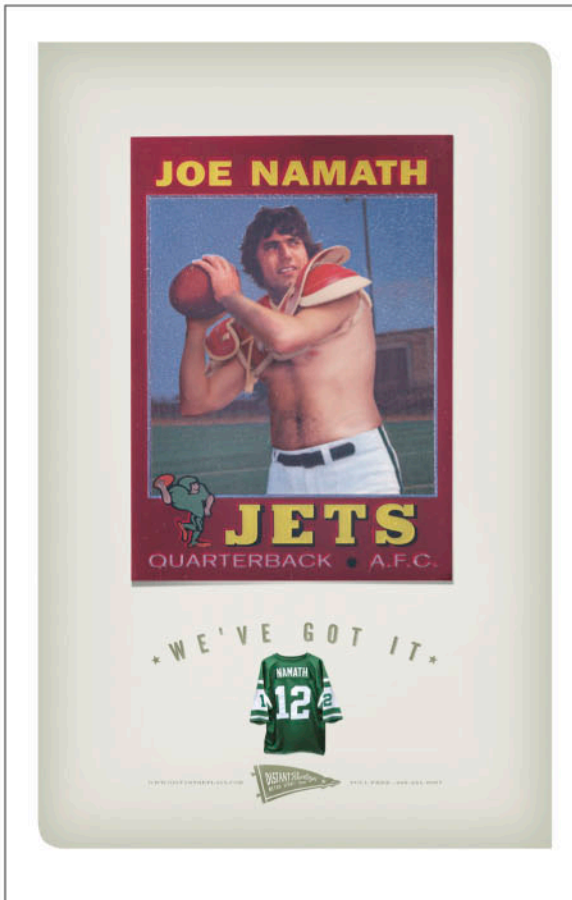
Sharing credit, quality of work and mutual respect are themes often repeated when speaking to people both inside and out

This page: Huey/Paprocki staff: (from left to right) Jim Crone, Aaron Thornton, Ron Huey, Michelle Montgomery, Scot Crooker, Laura Epperson, Joe Paprocki, Danielle Bryson, Andrea Eifrid, Courtenay Dutton, Jan Sharrow and Tom Sobotta.

Right: “Sierra Club wanted to let people know about an unnecessary road being planned which would have devastating effects on the largest unbroken tract of wilderness land east of the Mississippi,” said Joe Paprocki, creative director. “Since it was in the heart of the Great Smoky Mountains, we thought it would be fitting to use some of their well-known tacky souvenirs as a way to illustrate what could happen if the road became a reality.” Scot Crooker, art director; Chris Dutton, writer; Greg Slater, photographer.

“Distant Replays sells sports memorabilia. Even though they deal mostly with caps and jerseys, we thought trading cards would be a nice vehicle for the visual solutions. The toughest part wasn’t matching the body positions. It was degrading the image enough to match the aged look of the original photography,” said Joe Paprocki. Scot Crooker, art director; Chris Dutton, writer; Pat Molnar, photographer.

“Atlanta History Center is home to a plethora of art, artifacts and activities relevant to the South. This is a poster for Civil War Encampment—a week-end of storytelling and reenactments. Pulling off this image was a balancing act. The base photo was an actual Civil War shot. What really made it work was the subtlety in which we juxtaposed the happy baby with the stoic soldier,” said Joe Paprocki. “If we had gone too far in one direction or the other, it would have fallen flat.” Scot Crooker, art director; Chris Dutton, writer; Scott Lowden, photographer.



Huey/Paprocki

about Huey/Paprocki. But nearly everyone with whom I spoke about Huey/Paprocki mentioned that it is not the kind of place where you must work eighteen-hour days, six days a week to call yourself a “success.” The founders value a balance between work and home.

“I learned over the years that to make great ideas happen, you have to constantly push yourself and your clients to new levels,” Joe says. “But that does not mean you have to be at the office night after night, weekend after weekend to achieve your goals. By eliminating the needless bureaucracy, by avoiding the pointless paperwork, you have plenty of time to generate ideas. When there is no time left on the clock, you know that all your energy went into the work, not the usual agency crap that distracts you.”

Ron agrees. “We are incredibly efficient. We can work 8–6, 9–5, week upon week and get more done than I was ever able to do at bigger agencies. We can do that because we have rid ourselves of the layers that can bog you down. Being productive at work creates balance in our lives. I spend time with my family. My son expects me to go to T-ball with him. It’s all in how you place your priorities.”

Nowhere But Up

The people at Huey/Paprocki are unassuming about their well-earned success. They’re soft-spoken, welcoming and relaxed. They put stock in work, not pretense. They spend time creating brands, not yapping about them. With fourteen people and growing, they’ve finally outgrown their basement lair. There’s nowhere else for them to go but up.

While Huey/Paprocki’s years in the basement will soon be over, it’s unlikely to feature suspended staircases and million-dollar views. It will simply be a place where they can continue their unique experiment in essential advertising.

Too bad more people don’t experiment in their basements. The advertising landscape might improve markedly if they did. **CA**



No, the camera can’t steal the soul.
But it can occasionally hold it hostage.

HIGH

ANSEL ADAMS AT THE HIGH MUSEUM OF ART opens August 30th. Ansel Adams, *Aspens, Dawn, Dolores River Canyon, Autumn, Colorado, 1937*. Visit www.high.org or call 404.733.HIGH.

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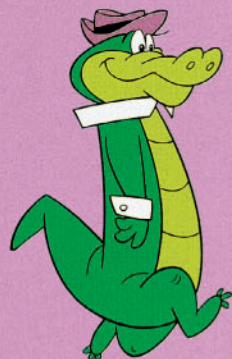
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Left: "Newspaper ad for the High Museum of Art. Open any metropolitan newspaper and find an art museum ad. The first thing that will strike you is that it's not very artful. Lots of type, dates, captions—choking out any and all white space. For the High Museum, we felt that it was important that our ads reflect the experience you'll find there," said Ron Huey, creative director. Scot Crooker, art director; Chris Dutton, writer.

"MedCareers is the largest online job placement company in the healthcare industry," said Joe Paprocki. "With an extremely tight timeline and an even tighter budget, we created a simple visual template and wrote a bunch of fun headlines. The best of which seem to have come from life experiences—in this case, I believe the writer had just returned from a visit with his son's pediatrician." Paul Crawford, art director; Bob Cianfrone, writer; Jim Fiscus, photographer.

This page: "Trade ad for Cartoon Network. There's a creative rule of thumb: When things die, people laugh. In this case, some poor alligator gave its life for a good chuckle," said Ron Huey. "The campaign helped propel Cartoon Network to Cable Marketer of the Year." Joe Paprocki, art director; Ron Huey, writer; Dave Kiesgen, photographer.

Huey/Paprocki

This page: "This trade ad for Honda Power Equipment targeted the tool rental market with a message about durability. We wanted to add a bit of humor into a category that was used to showing happy people mowing their lawns. This particular headline takes a little poke at the stereotypical renter," said art director Joe Paprocki. Bob Cianfrone, writer; Charlie McCullers, photographer.

"Magazine ad for WeatherBug. Sometimes you have no money and even less time. This was one of those times," said Ron Huey. "That's when you write about 500 headlines and hope that a few good ones fall out. In this case, a couple did and the art direction teed them up nicely." Paul Huggett, art director; Mark Cohen, writer.

No doubt about it, rental equipment gets its share of bumps and bruises. But Honda GX Series engines are rugged enough to handle the abuse, day after day, year after year. No wonder so many rental houses count on Honda to get the job done. For more information about our products, **HONDA ENGINES** call 1-800-426-7701 or visit us at www.honda.com. *Power with a clear advantage.*

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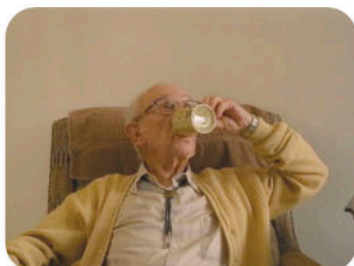
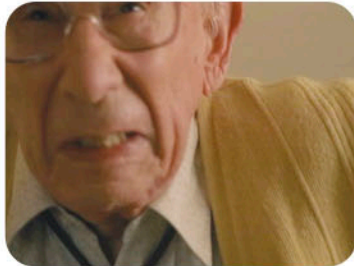
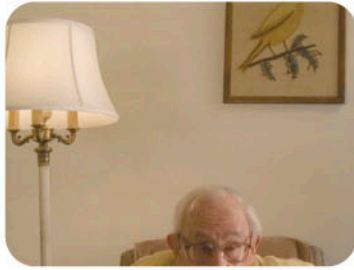
**NO ONE EVER SAID,
"BE GENTLE WITH THAT
PRESSURE WASHER,
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**ON A GOOD DAY,
OVER 6 MILLION PEOPLE VISIT OUR SITE.
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WE GET EVEN MORE.**

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This page: "AT&T Broadband was having some issues with customer service. They were fighting the perception of being a big, lethargic, uncaring company. Our task was to help make them more approachable while promoting their entertainment packages. Casting was everything for this spot. When we locked in the talent for the elderly gentleman, we knew we were golden," Joe Paprocki said. "Arguably the hardest part of the whole shoot was getting wild sounds of grandpa moaning while struggling to get out of the chair."

"Grandpa" :30
 (Open on a medium shot of a middle-class living room. We see the top half of an older gentleman's head rising up from the bottom of the frame. He appears to be straining to lift his head higher)
 SFX: Sounds of old man grunting and groaning.
 (Cut to series of tighter shots of him struggling to stand up from his recliner)
 SFX: Sound of people chanting from off camera. Go. Go. Go. Go...

(Cut to wider shot to see a family of four sitting on a sofa and cheering the old man on as he struggles to stand. He finally makes it fully upright as the family stands to applaud him)
 Anncr. (VO): Looking for quality family entertainment? Sign up now for AT&T digital cable and high-speed Internet and receive free local phone service.
 (Cut to art card: Free local phone with Internet and local cable. AT&T Broadband logo and phone number)
 Anncr. (VO): AT&T Broadband. Family entertainment for the whole family.
 (Cut back to grandpa chugging coffee from a cup)
 SFX: Family chanting...Chug! Chug! Chug!

Scot Crooker, art director; Chris Dutton, writer; Wayne Craig, director; Emerald Films, production company.
 "Television spot for Mizuno Golf, USA. Most golf club commercials are set on a lush, green fairway. Knowing that, we opted for a gritty, oil-stained airport tarmac where a disgruntled baggage handler actually shows respect for a set of Mizuno clubs," said creative director Ron Huey.

"Baggage Handler" :30
 (Open on medium shot of an airline baggage cart sitting on a tarmac. We see luggage being carelessly thrown in, some bouncing and falling to the ground)
 SFX: Luggage banging and crashing to ground.
 (Cut to reveal a baggage handler who is grabbing luggage from a conveyor belt and recklessly tossing it in the general direction of the cart. He sees a Mizuno golf bag coming down the conveyor and suddenly his demeanor changes. He carefully takes the golf bag and gently sets it on another cart. Then he returns to the conveyor and continues carelessly tossing the other luggage around)
 (Cut to art card with Mizuno logo)
 Anncr. (VO): Mizuno. Your passion is our obsession.
 Scot Crooker, art director; Chris Dutton, writer; Wayne Craig, director; Emerald Films, production company.

