

The Best Work You May Never See

Singing The Praises Of AmazonKindle

By Robert Goldrich

In "Tree," a spec spot conceived, directed and edited by Brian Neaman and Michael Southworth, a talking tree sings about the virtues of the AmazonKindle. Seated on a park bench next to the tree is a man, reading *Pride and Prejudice* on his Kindle. The tree croons the lyrics:

"He likes to read it in the sun.
He reads adventures just for fun.
You download stories anywhere.
A bookstore floating in the air.
Yeah, it's a better way to read.
That don't make paper out of me."

A woman walking her dog passes by and first looks at the singing tree in disbelief. Soon, though, she is bobbing her head to the song, now understanding the tree's gratitude to the Kindle for not being turned into paper for a book.

A voiceover end tag relates, "Download books in 60 seconds," accompanied by the slogan, "AmazonKindle. A better way to read."

Day jobs

Neaman and Southworth's main gig is as editors at Crew Cuts in New York. At the same time, they are hardly strangers to spec spot directing. Last year Neaman and Southworth—at the time primarily assistant editors with Crew Cuts—earned inclusion into "The Best Work You May Never See" gallery (*SHOOT*online, 5/7/10) on the strength of "Guitar," a spec ad they helmed, edited and entered into a Walmart contest seeking original broadcast commercials promoting the giant retailer. "Guitar," which wound up winning the contest, was a tug-at-the-heartstrings piece in which a mother talks about what she's saving up for—a real guitar for her young daughter who we see ultimately grow up and become a sought-after musician/performer in concert.

The directing duo followed that up with a comedic Bud Light spec commercial, "Jury Duty," which too won an advertiser contest, resulting in Neaman and Southworth earning a trip to Cannes for a screening of the spot. In the spec piece, jurors immediately feel the defendant is guilty. But upon being presented an evidence exhibit—a healthy supply of Bud Light—they decide to "deliberate" for a lengthy stretch. Deliberations turn into an ongoing party and result in follow-up jury requests for more evidence.

Southworth related that both the Bud Light and Walmart spec spots were "on brand and consistent with existing creative for those companies." He noted that AmazonKindle's "Tree" represented a departure from that approach.

"We set out to do something quirkier, more in line with our sensibilities and not necessarily following what the client had already done," said Southworth. "At first we envisioned the guy talking to a tree that was angry over his reading books and wasting paper. But then Matt O'Dowd came up with the idea of a song sung by the tree. We saw the hilarious potential and once we heard the song, we felt we definitely

had something special."

Composer/lyricist O'Dowd, whose day job is as a freelance copywriter (working regularly at interactive agency LBi, New York), has a track record of collaborating with Neaman and Southworth, including on Walmart's "Guitar." Another integral part of the spec team over the past year is executive producer Jeff Roos, a freelance agency producer (who's active at Digitas, New York).

For "Tree," Neaman additionally served as puppeteer (of the tree) with Southworth filling in the role of animator/VFX artist.

Like-minded

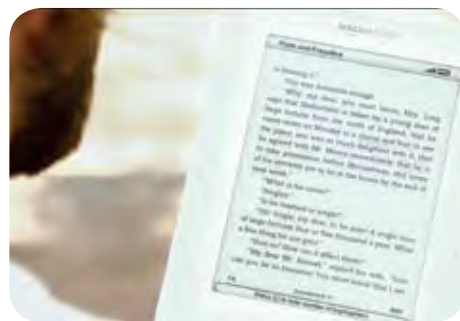
Neaman said that upon meeting and working with Southworth, initially as assistant editors at Crew Cuts, he found that they were like-minded and the two struck up a rapport. This led initially to their teaming on Walmart's "Guitar," the success of which fueled further spec spot collaborations.

The duo has also taken on some recent real-world jobs as directors—both helming and editing a web and in-store stop motion video for the Tassimo Brew Bot out of TBWA\Chiat\Day, New York, and web videos for Kool-Aid via Ogilvy & Mather, New York. (Crew Cuts handled production logistics and finishing for these projects.)

Asked if they harbor directorial aspirations, Southworth and Neaman said their focus is on editing. "We both love editing," affirmed Southworth. "There are challenges and fun in both editing and directing. We'll continue doing both and see where the market takes us and what we can do."

credits Client **AmazonKindle (spec spot)** Agency **Brian Neaman, Michael Southworth, creative directors. Production Brian Neaman, Michael Southworth, directors; Jeff Roos, executive producer; Gary Golembewski, DP. Editorial Crew Cuts, New York. Brian Neaman, Michael Southworth, editors. Post Crew Cuts, New York. Andy Witkowski, colorist/VFX artist. Animation/Visual Effects Brian Neaman, puppeteer; Michael Southworth, animator/VFX artist. Music Matt O'Dowd, composer/lyricist. Audio Crew Cuts Nick Montgomery, mixer.**

Neaman and Southworth bark up the right tree.



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