

TOOL OF NORTH AMERICA

When it comes to this thing called digital media, no matter how savvy you are, it's all too easy to feel like Wilma Flintstone sitting down to dinner with Jane Jetson. Unless you've spent every spare nanosecond keeping up with rapid-fire technological leaps, how do you even start the conversation? And if you add the problem—or creative opportunity—that the lines between entertainment, information and content in general, are blurring at a dizzying rate, it's hard to sound smart in any discussion.

That's when it comes in handy to have the right Tool (horrible pun intended). At production company Tool of North America, founded in 1995, digital was added to their already solid live-action slate in early 2009. Now, at their base in Santa Monica, California, and the satellite office in New York, live action, digital and integrated worlds are navigated with equal ease. Whatever serves the story—live action only; live action and interactive or digital only—is what the company will do.

Tool co-founder Erich Joiner says, "The people here are all about the idea. Suddenly we're having more freedom to tell the story. And one thing we know—if it's going viral, it *has* to be entertaining." With a full complement of live-action and interactive directors, the company takes on projects ranging from traditional commercials to interactive stories made just for the iPad to non-scripted online adventures where the outcomes are dictated by viewers.

Dustin Callif, executive producer/digital, says, "When people talk about digital, they could be referring to several different things they have in mind, and they're all different from person to person. Most of the time the question we get is 'Can this be done?'" Most of the time at Tool, the answer is yes. And then they work out exactly *how*.

It was particularly poetic when y&r Chicago, the agency for

Sears Craftsman Tools, awarded Tool a project to create an interactive reality series called *Screw*d*. The idea was to drop a hammers-and-nails neophyte into three remote locations to see if an amateur could survive by building his or her way out using Craftsman tools—whether by dune buggy, raft or what-have-you. The twist is that the online audience participates in real time while the show is being streamed live. Viewers tweet and post comments on Facebook that "help" the contestant survive. Sometimes the comments are just observations or unwelcome advice.

A casting call for tool-challenged people went out—you had to be willing to travel to parts unknown and complete tasks using said tools, and, if successful, you would earn a prize of \$50,000. Thousands of online auditions poured in. Independent filmmaker and actor Alan Weischedel got the job. Throughout three shoots, Weischedel will have braved an alligator-infested bayou in Louisiana; a barren, blistering stretch of the Mojave Desert; and a mountainous thicket in California. In each location, he's sent a shipping crate filled with basics—food, maybe a windbreaker and a treasure trove of Craftsman tools tailored to the task at hand. Within 48 hours, he had to build his way out to survive, and then escape. Online episodes have Weischedel talking back to the audience, commenting on whatever message he's just received, like the time he needed to build a dune buggy to escape the Mojave Desert. Part of the challenge was to find the vehicle's tires, which were hidden from him. The online audience helped him find them with clues—a viewer tweeted, "The tire is southeast 100 paces." The audience also asked Weischedel to do wacky things such as "Give us a fashion show" and "Sing us a song. Amuse us!" Viewer comments were streamed through an ever-present earpiece.

Live-action director Matt Ogens and interactive director Grant Skinner co-helmed the series, which was part reality show, part

Tool of North America supplied the caption information.

Right: Interactive film *All Ends, Ends All*, from the iPad Touching Stories series. "You wake up in the back of a trunk. How did you get there? Find out in this interactive adventure. Shake your iPad to run from guys shooting at you. Dial different phone numbers in the interactive phone booth. Explore, interact and try to make sense of this bizarre story." John Hills, Domani Studios, creative director; Victor Brown, Lost Planet, editor; Micah Acinapura, development artist; Erich Joiner/Jason Zada, directors; Robbie Tilton, agency producer; Dustin Callif (digital)/Brian Latt, executive producers; Domani Studios, ad agency; Boards, client.

Interactive film *Sarah & Jerry*, from the iPad Touching Stories series. "A playful take on a few characters in a house, but the twist is that they have entered a zone where they are now being controlled by the user. Touch the painting on the wall to hear what the portrait has to say, swipe left or right to see a Native American dancing in nothing but pasties or a mini horse dressed up for a rodeo. Think *The Truman Show*, but you are the one pulling the strings." John Hills, Domani Studios, creative director; Victor Brown, editor; Lost Planet, editorial company; Mica Acinapura, Domani Studios, development artist; Sean Ehringer, director; Robbie Tilton, agency producer; Dustin Callif (digital)/Brian Latt, executive producers; Domani Studios, ad agency; Boards, client.





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This page: “**Magazine Buyer**” 2:06 for Bud Light. “The moral of this Erich Joiner-directed spot for Budweiser might read something like: Don’t buy a porn magazine in a liquor store where you might suddenly run into an old prom date, get embarrassing, unsolicited help from a sleazy porn connoisseur in line behind you as the store clerk asks you which complimentary sex toys you’d like with your porn magazine, because if you do, that place could be the scene of a robbery-turned-hostage crisis and you could end up on national TV while a throng of reporters rush to interview your mom about her ‘porno buying son.’”

Brant Herzer, DDB Chicago, art director; Mark Gross, DDB Chicago, creative director; Kevin Zimmerman, The Whitehouse Post, editor; The Whitehouse Post, editorial company; Erich Joiner, Tool, director; Dan Bryant, DDB Chicago, agency producer; Brian Latt, Tool/Jennifer Siegel, executive producers; D-Train, visual effects company; DDB Chicago, ad agency; Bud Light, client.



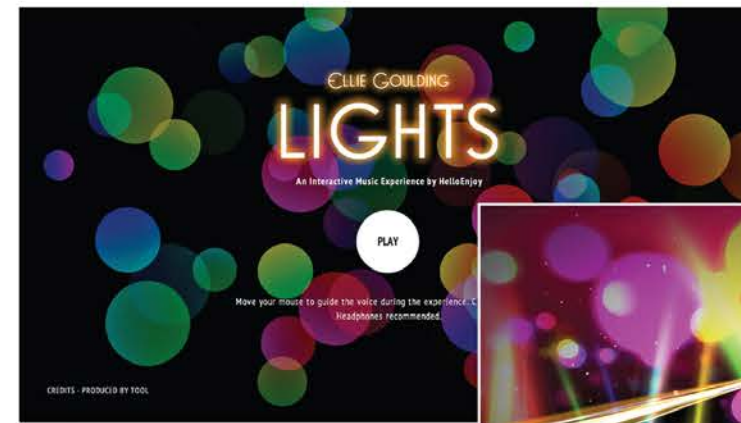
“In this 60-second **‘Harmony’** spot for Toyota, co-directors Erich Joiner and Robert Richardson, crafted a visually stunning and dynamic, stop-motion story of a Prius built with organic materials to convey Toyota’s goal of ‘harmony with the environment.’”

Aaron Frisch, art director; Aaron Frisch/Arun Nemali, creative directors; Hal Honigsberg, editor; Chrome, editorial company; Erich Joiner/Robert Richardson, directors; Oscar Thomas, agency producer; Brian Latt/Jennifer Siegel, executive producers; The Basement, visual effects company; Dentsu America, ad agency; Toyota, client.



Right: “A WebGL interactive music experience, inspired by singer-songwriter Ellie Goulding’s single **‘Lights.’**”

HelloEnjoy, interaction director; Ellie Goulding, artist; Dustin Califf (digital)/Oliver Fuselier/Brian Latt, executive producers; Interscope Records, client.



lights.elliougolding.com



interactive adventure and part twisted infomercial for Craftsman Tools. Ogens says, “We spent six months on this before we shot, working between the live-action and digital departments, working everything out. With all the work we’re doing now, the technology gets better and better every day. We’re always testing things.” Skinner shows his interactive expertise by developing the systems that ensure the online audience will have optimal, seamless access to Weischedel. While a skeleton crew documented the action with handheld cameras, a portable LiveU backpack Weischedel carried augmented the footage with streaming video so the audience could watch the action unfold online. Only a couple of crew were anywhere near Weischedel; the rest of the crew was situated nearby, but out of his sight and reach.

For Joiner, expanding into digital seemed right, early on. He says, “For a creative person, the expenditure to do something like this wasn’t a numbers thing, it was an oh-my-god, we can do cool stuff with this.” Brian Latt, managing director, helped to usher Tool into the hybrid production company it has become, where live action and digital are interchangeable, again, serving the story. “The first year was like drinking from a fire hose,” he says. “But it turns out, there are a lot of similarities between live action and digital.”

Joiner began his career at Goodby, Silverstein & Partners in San Francisco as an art director and rose to associate creative director in two years. He worked on such high-profile accounts as Sega, Isuzu and the “Got Milk?” campaign for the Milk Advisory Board. A Southern California native, he spent his days going to the beach after school, a typical surfer kid. When he began as a student at Art Center, in Pasadena, he chose film as his major. While fulfilling his basic curriculum requirements, he took an advertising concept class and saw that there was big fun to be had. Switching his energies, upon graduation he looked around for a job in advertising and landed at Goodby.

In 1995, he opened Tool of North America, heading back to Southern California. What’s ironic is that he’s back to where he

started—working in film and going to the beach. His streamlined, beautifully-appointed Manhattan Beach cottage, twenty minutes south of his Santa Monica offices, sits on the sandy boardwalk of a long stretch of beach. Surfboards and a skateboard are perched against a wall in the corner. His couch faces the waves. But it wasn’t just a yearning to come back to this ocean view that brought him back to Los Angeles. In fact, in San Francisco, he had managed to seek out dwellings with water nearby, one near the craggy Cliff House shore at a far end of San Francisco, and one in the hamlet of Sausalito. He had another reason to head south. “The talent is in Los Angeles,” he explains. “My casting happens mainly in Los Angeles and then in New York. We’ve tapped into such great up-and-coming talent through the years—improv, dramatic, whatever you want.”

Joiner and his team have assembled an impressive roster of directors. Joining Tool in 2002, Academy Award winner Robert Richardson, ASC, is known for his collaborations with Martin Scorsese, Oliver Stone and Quentin Tarantino as a director of photography. For Tool, he has directed spots for Kodak and SBC, among others. In a singular piece of gorgeous work, Richardson directed the American Express spot featuring Robert De Niro narrating his own musing on New York post-9/11. Geordie Stephens, who signed on at Tool in 2006, earned his BA and MFA in sculpture, installation and graphic design before moving into advertising over a twelve-year stint. Most recently, he spent three years at CP+B as an art director and creative director.

Like many of the directors at Tool, Stephens can relate to the creative teams on whose boards he sits, because he was once a creative himself. He says, “I have always been drawn to ideas that resonate beyond a commercial or a piece of content, because they represent a memory, or a wish, or a dream. And when I read ideas like those, I am immediately engaged. I want to know more about the idea...what inspired it and how the creatives imagine it coming to life. Through all the years that I spent sitting in an advertising office, late at night with my writer, I always wanted to make ideas that triggered something



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This page: "Robert De Niro takes us on a 60-second emotive journey through New York in this **'My Life. My Card.'** TV spot for American Express that was co-directed by Martin Scorsese and Robert Richardson."

Tom Drymalski, art director; Jonathan Koffler, writer; Chris Mitton, creative director; Hank Corwin, editor; Lost Planet, editorial company; Robert Richardson/Martin Scorsese, directors; Gail Zeldin, agency producer; Jennifer Siegel, executive producer; Ogilvy & Mather, ad agency; American Express, client.

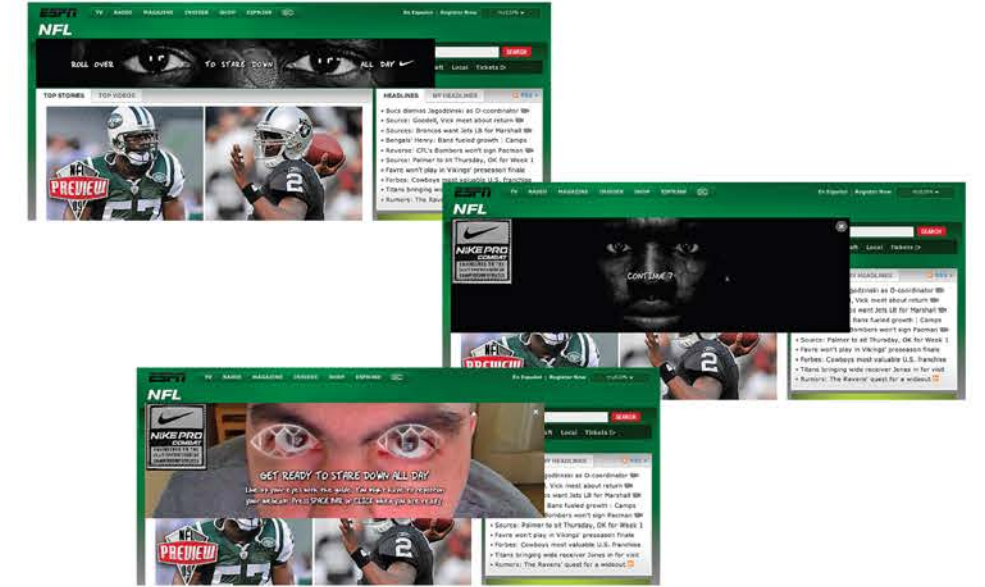


"In a world where everyone has cursor arrows instead of hands, Shawn is a freak...because he has hands. Tool director Geordie Stephens collaborated with Goodby, Silverstein & Partners' creatives to create an intriguing, bleak, backward world that looks more like a Roman Polanski film than a TV commercial."

"Shawn" :60

(Open on Shawn putting together a jigsaw puzzle at his kitchen table. He taps his fingers absentmindedly) Shawn: I've been called a weirdo...a freak. (He checks himself in the mirror and puts on his coat) Shawn: I've been laughed at...assaulted...detained at. (Cut to old home video of Shawn as a young boy. He proudly holds up a stick-figure drawing of his family. He dribbles a basketball in his driveway) Shawn: There's prejudice out there for sure. But people know about me. They've heard about me, you know. (Cut back to Shawn as he ties his shoes, grabs his keys and opens the door. Cut to Shawn at a diner. A kid from the booth in front of him is checking out his hands in wonder. The boy's mom suddenly realizes what's going on and yanks her kid back. Shawn looks at her hands. They are in fact arrow cursors. Everyone in the diner has cursors for hands. A cursor-hand man stops banging away at the piano and turns to look. Cut back to Shawn at his kitchen table) Shawn: (philosophical) I don't have cursors. (pauses) I have "hands." They're called hands. (He has a box of memorabilia beside him, and pulls out a wooden yo-yo, origami, an abacus. He spies a well-worn case on the table and runs his fingers over it. He pops the latch and pulls out a pair of vintage prosthetic wooden cursors) Shawn (VO): (finally, quietly) My parents meant well. They said these were more natural. (Cut to footage of Shawn awkwardly using the cursors) Shawn (VO): I think my hands embarrassed them. They embarrassed me. But I've gotten comfortable with my hands. I like them now. (Cut to Shawn walking through his neighborhood. Shawn passes a woman who is taping up a "Missing Cat" notice on a pole. She tries to remove a piece of tape that's stuck to her cursor, but it sticks to her other cursor. Shawn smiles as he removes the tape and throws it away) Woman: Thank you very much. (She reaches out with a cursor and touches his hand). Super: The new TouchSmart PC. Logo: HP

Mike Coyne, art director; Jesse Gazzuolo, writer; Jim Elliott, creative director; Christjan Jordan, editor; Arcade Edit, editorial company; Geordie Stephens, director; Meagan Moore, agency producer; Matt Bonin/Dustin Callif/Brian Latt, executive producers; Goodby, Silverstein & Partners, ad agency; HP, client.



This page: Help Remedies TV commercial. "We were recreating vivid, surreal dreams. So, each shot needed to have a beautiful, stylized quality," said director Geordie Stephens. "I wanted these dreams to have that illusionary, subconscious quality that we've seen from Hitchcock and Kubrick."

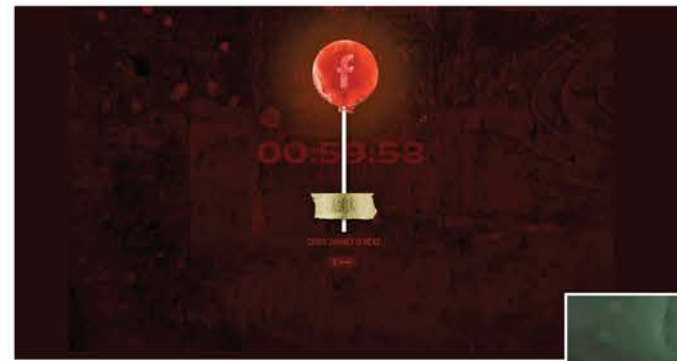
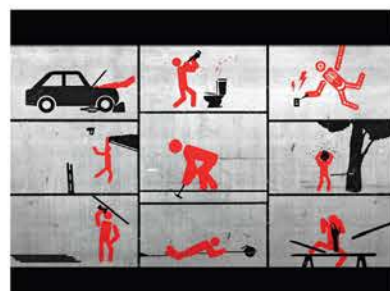
"Help Picture" :60

(Open on "Help I Can't Sleep" package sitting next to a woman in deep slumber) Anncr. (VO): "Help I Can't Sleep" recommends the following dream scenario. In this dream, you live in a picture... (Close up of the woman's face from a painting) Anncr. (VO): ...that hangs on the wall of a dermatologist's waiting room. (Cut to show the whole picture of the woman milking a cow. Cut to another picture) Anncr. (VO): There is a photograph that hangs on the opposite wall. It is of a man. You are in love with this man. (The man seems to stare directly into the eyes of the woman) Anncr. (VO): One night, you step out of your picture and walk across the dermatologist's waiting room. You enter into the picture of the man. (She walks across the room and enters the picture of the man) Anncr. (VO): The two of you make love. He smells like metal and makes strange noises with his lips. (They make love on top of a steel beam. Cut to close-up of her disappointed face) Anncr. (VO): He is a bad lover. (The woman walks back to her picture) Anncr. (VO): You walk back into your picture. You milk the cow. Her teats fit perfectly in your hand. You are the best milkmaid. The cow prefers you. (Cut to woman in deep slumber) Camera Card: Enjoy your dreams.

Paul Caiozzo, creative director; Christjan Jordan, Arcade Edit, editor; Geordie Stephens, director; Mandie Bove/Joyce Chen, agency producers; Matt Bonin/Dustin Callif/Brian Latt, executive producers; Agency 215, ad agency; Help Remedies Inc., client.

"To extend the Nike Pro Combat storyline from the David Fincher directed TV spot, Tool created an interactive banner experience that allows users to have a **'Staring Battle'** with star NFL running back Adrian Peterson. Within the banner experience, there is integrated webcam and motion sensor technology to allow for a real-time staring competition. This co-directing project between Jason Zada and leading interactive developer Grant Skinner pushed the boundaries of hi-def video and interactivity within the banner. Depending on how well you do against Adrian, you may be faced with different reactions to try and get you off your game, including head-bobs and even a fly walking across Peterson's stone-cold stare." James Moslander, art director; Anthony Goldstein, writer; Jeff Williams, executive creative director; Christina Stumpf, The Whitehouse Post, editor; Grant Skinner, Tool/Jason Zada, Tool, directors; Mary Alberque, agency producer; Dustin Callif (digital), Tool/Brian Latt, Tool/Jennifer Siegel, Tool, executive producers; Wieden & Kennedy, ad agency; Nike, client.

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like that; something honest, original and more often than not, something that made me laugh.” Stephens’s projects at Tool, for clients including Sprint, Hewlett-Packard and BMW’s MINI, have a lively, fun quality about them.

Tool’s roster of interactive directors are a roll call of notable innovators, such as Alexx Henry, Graeme Devine, 3-D development team HelloEnjoy, led by Carlos Ulloa, and Seeper, an arts and technology group. Devine’s credits as a known game designer, writer and programmer include The 7th Guest, Halo Wars and Quake 3. Apple tapped him to run their ios gaming division in charge of all gaming designed for the iPhone, iPod Touch and iPad platforms. Devine departed Apple to join Tool and apply his gaming skillset and multi-touch gaming expertise to advertising.

Jason Zada, who can only be called a hybrid digital/live-action director, took on a project for Leo Burnett Chicago called “David on Demand.” At the Cannes 2010 Festival, one of the agency’s creative recruiters, David Perez, spent the entire festival streamed live—his every move documented in real time—succumbing to tweets and messages from an online community that grew into the hundreds of thousands. Perez wore a LiveU backpack to stream his antics, was to do whatever the online community asked, including spontaneously bursting out in a love song, asking a complete (gorgeous) stranger to go to dinner, hijacking a Bentley, and—much to his mother’s horror—getting a tattoo. “The biggest thing that came out of this is that I’ve realized I really want to be a part of how messaging is changing,” Perez says. “Not even just in advertising, but in seemingly disparate venues—all kinds of content.” For Leo Burnett, the stunt earned them press, as Perez appeared



on morning talk shows and news shows. Perez claims that as a recruiter, it has opened up global channels for him. One has to wonder what would

happen if a tweet came through that was even more invasive than getting a tattoo, say something of a lurid nature? “Jason and his team kept me safe and sane,” Perez says. “From the top down, Tool took major ownership of the project. We had no idea how the technology would work in a helicopter, a boat, a Bentley, but Tool made it work.”

For Latt, who joined Tool five years ago, helping to run the organization is a challenge that is ever-changing and keeps him learning. A graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he had tried engineering as a career but found it lacking, so he landed in special effects, eventually making his way to Tool. He says, “It’s been a very unusual path for me. I love the creative challenge here. We really are making mini art films. It’s our job to elevate the brand and it’s that artistic expression that excites me.”

Joiner reluctantly reveals a secret about Tool as the name of the company. One may think that it means having the right implement, maybe the brain is the ultimate tool—something like that. Or maybe some people go right to the other meaning of tool, which is the male part. They would be correct. Joiner says, “One day, our accountant, or someone on the business side, said we better come up with a name. We had no time and we thought Tool would be funny. Then the guy said, well, you better add something to it, so we can register it. He thought Tool of North America was great. And we thought TNA was funny.” Once a boy, always a boy. CA

Left: “To celebrate soccer legend Diego Maradona’s 50th birthday, Puma and Droga5 wanted to create ‘the world’s largest soccer juggle,’ so Tool and interactive director Grant Skinner crafted a Facebook app that let users from around the world start a soccer ‘juggle,’ pass a digital soccer ball to their friends and view a juggling leaderboard.” Amanda Clelland/Petter Hermarck, art directors; Tim Gordon/Erik Hogfeldt, writers; Jeff Levine, Tool, interactive designer; David Droga/Ted Royer/Nik Studzinski, executive creative directors; Grant Skinner, Tool, director; Christian Busch/Sam Kilbreth, agency producers; Dustin Callif (digital), Tool/Brian Latt, Tool, executive producers; Droga5 New York, ad agency; Puma, client.

“In this interactive, live-streamed reality show, *Screw’d*, we sent a tool neophyte into the wild and forced him to survive with just his wits, an assortment of Craftsman tools and some help from the online audience, via Twitter. Created using HTML/JavaScript, the show site works cross-platform and leveraged our ability to stream live from remote locations such as the desert, bayou and mountains.” Richard Fischer, art director; Evan Thompson, writer; Mark Panik, editor; DONT PANIK!, editorial company; Matt Ogens/Grant Skinner (interactive)/Matt Witt (digital), directors; Kara Pierce, agency producer; Dustin Callif (digital)/Oliver Fuselier/Brian Latt, executive producers; Young & Rubicam Chicago, ad agency; Sears/Craftsman, client.

This page: “Take This Lollipop” is an interactive, live-action Facebook Connect experience. Can’t tell you much more until you take the lollipop.” Jason Nickel, interactive developer; Jason Zada, director; Dustin Callif (digital)/Brian Latt, executive producers; Future Perfect, music company.