

Philippe Andre

Hitting the mark stateside.

By Art Smith

I am very much enjoying the work I've been doing," says Philippe Andre, a French director represented stateside via bicoastal Villains. "I've been lucky enough to find innovative scripts infused with emotion, and those are exactly the kinds of projects that bring out my passion."

Andre began the year in Australia, tying up traffic for four weeks at a major Sydney intersection, where he shot a Peugeot 407 ad titled "Toys" out of his French roost, Wanda Productions, Saint-Denis La Plaine, France. The commercial, done via BETC Euro RSCG, Paris, featured 27 "toy" cars scaled to human size sailing through the busy city streets. The ad, which posits the Peugeot as a "real car," earned a Gold Lion at this year's Cannes International Advertising Festival. More recently, Andre helmed a Sharp spot in July called "More to See," out of Wieden+Kennedy, New York, which marked his first stateside gig since signing for representation with Villains in June.

"More to See" follows regular folks through the recognizable rigors of an average day. The twist is that each person goes about their routine with their eyes closed. In the end, a woman opens her eyes and sees a Sharp Aquos flat screen TV, which promises an infinite realm of visual delights. "I was very attracted to this script," enthuses Andre. "It offered lots of challenges and possibilities, so what more could I want? It was human, live and simple with a lot of real-life aspects as opposed to something with many post-effects shots."

Andre's work often contains visual effects but, surprisingly, he doesn't choose projects based on that characteristic. "I don't love special effects at all, in fact," he states. "I use them when the camera can't do something that's needed. For me, it is just another tool to do the job and that's all."

With that in mind, Andre set out to bring the Sharp storyboards to life sans effects. "It was actually very easy to do so," he relates. "I was ex-

pecting something much more complicated, but we cast it very precisely and had many rehearsals with the actors and the extras, which is needed when you're asking hundreds of people to walk through the streets of Rio [de Janeiro] with their eyes closed. We trained the actors to open their eyes on one out of every four steps just so they could see where they were. Almost on the first take, everybody was walking around without bumping into each other or falling down. They were wonderful."

MUSIC MAN

Andre's career began at the Paris Conservatory, where he was on track to becoming a conductor. "That was the plan," he says with a chuckle. "I was there to make music for film, but during my three years [there] I discovered what it was to be a director



Andre

France before tackling commercials for such high-profile European clients as Baume & Mercier, Rodier, Azzaro, Renault and Martini. At that point, Andre had yet to combine his two passions—music and filmmaking—but that would all change when he decided to enter the music video arena.

He has since become one of Europe's premier music video direc-



"More To See" for Sharp.

so I completely changed my mind. From that point on, I was at the cinema twice a day seeing all the movies I could. I was fascinated by filmmaking."

Andre then proceeded to carve out a new career path for himself by enrolling—and eventually earning—a degree from Paris' ESRA film school. After graduation, he shot short films and promos for the Museum of Modern Art in Paris. He also occupied himself by designing logos and station identity tags for the Planete Cable TV channel in

tors, having helmed clips for such artists as Ophelie Winter ("Shame on U"), All Saints ("Under the Bridge"), Roger Sanchez ("Another Chance," "You Can't Change Me"), Youssou N'Dour ("My Hope is in You"), Morcheeba ("World Looking In"), Elisa ("Come Speak to Me") and Faithless featuring Dido ("One Step Too Far").

"I was clearly devoting the majority of my time to directing videos," he says. "I pretty much did that exclusively for a couple of years. I had the opportunity to do a few spots in the U.K., and I also shot Miller Lite and New York Stock Exchange commercials for the U.S. market. I was really proud of that work, but videos were the priority for me." (Andre shot those ads via his affiliation with now defunct Harry Nash.)

Last year, Andre decided to take some time off from doing clips in order to focus on his commercial endeavors. "I really gave myself this year or so to work only on commercials and to try and find representation for future work both in commercials and music videos in the U.S."

He accomplished that goal through his pact with Villains and currently continues to shoot spots in

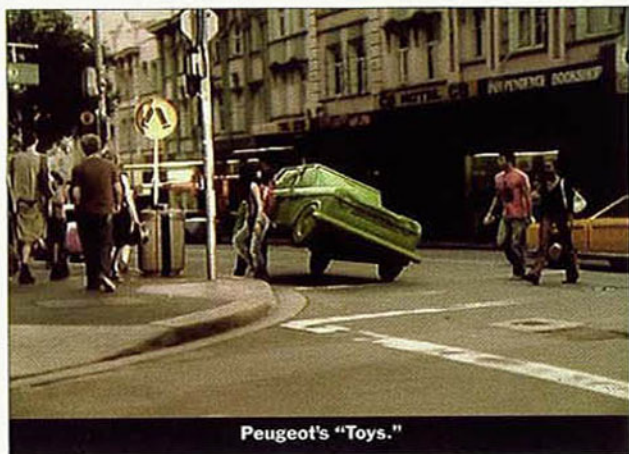
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France via Wanda Productions. Going forward, Andre hopes to divide his time evenly between videos and commercials, both here and abroad. "I'm bidding on a couple of U.S. jobs right now, but I also want to get back to music videos because I miss it," he shares. "I've done quite a lot of videos in the past and there are many U.S. artists I'd love to work with. Right now I am constantly going back and forth between flats in London and Paris. Sometimes it feels like I live on the train between the two, but going forward I'm hoping to make many more trips to the United States as well."*

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Peugeot's "Toys."