

> He beat out David Fincher to direct "The Toys", Peugeot's \$2-million tour de force through BETC Euro RSCG, Paris – airing in 24 countries – which called for humans to interact with 20 life-sized toy vehicles (see Top Spots, pg. 17). Brittany-born Philippe André loves to blend the human with the surreal, as demonstrated in last year's poignant "Metamorphosis", also for Peugeot through Euro. Art director Eric Holden explains the agency's decision to go with André: "Fincher wanted to do the commercial completely in CGI and we were a little bit afraid of that... We decided to do half CGI and half model making", and that's just what André proposed. Holden recalls jokingly: "All the producers said, 'What? You are doing the commercial with *him*?' André's UK advertising career kicked off in the late '90s with Guinness work for HHCL & Partners, and Adidas "Tennis Klub" for Leagas Delaney (Anna Kournikova and Martina Hingis play doubles in the middle of a throng of NY clubbers). US projects for Miller Lite and NYSE followed. A music video veteran, he was nominated for a 1998 Brit Award for All Saint's "Under the Bridge". Repped in Paris by Wanda and London by Bikini, André is in negotiations with US prodcos. He recently completed a Christian Aid PSA through Euro, London.

**I was very happy Euro awarded me the Peugeot job** because the competition was serious. Honestly I think the idea was great. The script said, "We are in a world where cars don't exist any more; the only cars are toys scaled to human size [except] the Peugeot 407." I think I was awarded it because of two main ideas: to make these cars real (we built them from scratch on location in Sydney), and to give a mood to the commercial. I didn't want to go for something fake in post, because we were supposed to be in a fake world to begin with. I wanted to go for something realistic, to have a kind of documentary sensation, as though you were in the '70s with *Taxi Driver* or *French Connection* – a bit grainy and real.

**I like it when it's simple.** I had lots of options in the edit with over 10 hours of footage, and I could have made something spectacular using plenty of my camera positions and wide shots, but it would have been cold. I like when you see the humanity: for example, just one person having trouble with his own car. That's why we shot from the interior of the real car, using the shape of the windows. You don't see too much, but you want to know who's inside looking out.

**I work in-camera as much as possible.** In the past I took a visual approach and worked with a lot of special effects. But the more I go on, the more I want to bring in humanity, to use actors as much as I can, and to involve story and narration. In "Metamorphosis" we had an ugly car in Havana, Cuba, trying to seduce people because it's a lonely car, and the best thing the car can do is transform itself into a 206. It makes so much effort, it succeeds in losing its shape.

**The most difficult thing to do** is to mix post with strong art direction. It's strange – you have directors who are very good in visuals, post, or very good with actors, but they're not always the same. These days I would rather work only with actors, and lose the light, lose the post, everything else.



## PEUGEOT'S "THE TOYS" PLAYS UP PHILIPPE ANDRÉ'S PENCHANT FOR BLENDING HUMAN WITH SURREAL

# TOYBOY



(A) Early work for rockers All Saints; (B) Peugeot's "The Toys" through BETC Euro RSCG; (C) Philippe André.

**I didn't start as a director, I wanted to be a conductor.** I studied at the Paris Conservatory, then I went to film school to learn music for film, not to learn directing. But then I discovered what being a director could be and I went to the French cinema three days a week to watch movies. After that I worked with the Museum of Modern Art for two years making small videos with painters and artists. I did a touch of TV design, creating logos for channels, then videos, then commercials.

**I wasn't thinking about a real career,** but I gradually realized that music is something you do alone. I like being alone writing – I always write my treatments for music videos – but I can't live with just that. I need the crew, I need to be with people. I need the collaboration. I need DPs, I need editors. And music is not like that at all. I had to find something else. I fell in love with directing. It was not difficult.

**At the beginning I was not so collaborative,** but the more you learn the more you open your mind. Other people come with very good ideas, and you just have to listen to them.

**My parents did not influence me at all.** My father played a bit of music but not so much; he was MD of a bank. My brother is a graphic designer, he does a bit of painting as well.

**I've been offered movies a couple of times;** most of the time the scripts are not very good. I don't want to make my first-time movie with a bad script because I'm so passionate I would kill myself on it. I prefer to start with a small independent movie, really idea-driven. I was developing a movie last year but we had to stop because the collaboration with the author of the book did not go so well.

**I'm going to shoot my first short film** in a couple of months. It's an original story I've written. I prefer not to talk about this script. It's quite close to some of the music videos I did. It's based on human stories but always with a twist. I don't like talking about emotions and relationships between people only in a frontal way. I prefer to have some layers in it.

**Good stories are never what they seem to be about.** People don't believe in love any more so you have to find another layer and tell another story. If they expect the story to be about love they'll reject it.

**In movies you often feel disappointed** at the [superficial] level of things people want to tell you. Most of the time movies aren't art. It's so much about the industry. I do like American and Italian independent films though.

**Michel [Gondry] has made a fantastic career.** But I will go in my own direction in movies. I'm not sure what it's going to be, but I hope to come in with a brand-new style.

**No, I can't tell you my age.** Less than 40. ●

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