



DYNAMIC DUO Cary Sachs, left, and Tom McGough have helped Pongo develop its own unique audiovisual signature.

Savvy Style Makes Spots Sing

Shop's creative flair draws clients and moves audiences **By Todd Longwell**

IN THE CROWDED WORLD of creative marketing, standing above the crowd requires a unique artistic approach and insight into the minds of audiences.

Take Pongo. Like all producers of spots, the studio's mission is to sell the unique merits of the programs being advertised. But over the course of its 25 years in the business, the L.A.-based creative marketing agency has developed its own brash, one-of-a-kind audiovisual signature.

One of the company's hallmarks is something it likes to call the "Pongo push" — an ever-so-brief pause in the action

where the frame does a quick zoom-in.

"It's a visual moment that grabs your attention," says Pongo founder, CEO and president Tom McGough. "It takes a breath for a joke, or a beat for a visual reaction onscreen. It's a way of turning up the heat. It's in your face."

But the defining characteristic of their work is more the overall Pongo punch than any single artistic device.

"Our cuts are like an aggressive Phil Spector 'wall of sound,'" says Cary Sachs, chief marketing officer and senior VP of Pongo, who joined the company in 2005. "It's the power editing that sets us apart."

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Cary Sachs

Pongo specializes in slam-bang promos, on-air campaigns, sizzle reels, radio spots and integrated brand marketing campaigns for clients ranging from Disney, ABC and the Game Show Network to Subway, Michelin and Nestle.

Although its 15-person staff works on spots for dramas on occasion, the studio's true métier is comedy.

"Comedy is the hardest to cut, and the people who do it really well are few and far between, and they're absolutely one of the best," says Garen Van de Beek, exec VP and creative director of CBS Marketing Group, a regular client. "They bring a cer-

tain kind of frenetic energy to their cuts.”

The style works well with cable channel Disney XD, which has used Pongo on numerous spots over the years, including its recent “Show Me the Monday” campaign.

“We had a company do the original packaging, then Pongo took it to a higher level of fun and randomness that was great,” says Jill Hotchkiss, VP of marketing and creative for Disney XD at Disney ABC Television Group. “Their graphics are unexpected. There are goldfish flying in the air and llamas that appear.”

Given Pongo’s madcap style, it seems appropriate that McGough named the company after the canine patriarch in Disney’s “101 Dalmatians,” a breed of dog renowned for its inexhaustible energy.

But unlike its fictional four-legged counterpart, Pongo’s wild rhythms are carefully plotted – often before the first image is added to the edit.

“I’m laying down a cut right now, and there’s no video,” Sachs says. “It’s just a voiceover and music bites, and that’s it. We’ll know exactly how the story is going to be told, the cadence, how it’s going to begin and end, just by the audio, without having to even put in a sound bite from the actual show yet.”

In person, New Jersey-born Sachs comes off as more high-energy and Pongo-like, while Connecticut native McGough is more reserved.

“There may be some personality differences, but what we do share is the same goals, the same work ethic and the same passions,” Sachs says. “We agree on the way to run the business. It would be hard to work with somebody for 10 years and to not have a great relationship. To respect one another is huge.”

Going forward, Pongo is looking to expand its graphics business, designing logos and animations for broadcast and digital campaigns.

Lately, “there are a lot of people who use graphics recklessly,” McGough says. “They have to be there for a reason. You can’t get so deep into the graphics in a spot that you forget what you’re selling. We try to have the right amount of graphics that accentuate what we want to accentuate without it being overdone.”

McGough would also like the company to do some select pro bono work for worthy causes such as climate change.

That may sound like a stretch for a company known as a purveyor of wacky comedy, but McGough understands the power of persuasion. “I’ve always thought that we ply our trade in the deepest recesses of the human mind, trying push a button way down in their emotions and get them to react to something we put on the screen,” he says.



@25 YEARS OF CREATIVE PROMOS

1990

Tom McGough opens Pongo in Burbank with a staff of five.

1999

Pongo launches its home entertainment unit.

2001

The company relocates its offices to Hollywood.

2004

Pongo wins Key Award award for the home entertainment release of “Scarface.”

2005

Pongo scores another Key Award for the home entertainment release of **James Bond Collection**.

2006

Trailer Park TV co-founder and VP Cary Sachs joins Pongo as chief marketing officer and senior vice president.

2006

Pongo starts digital/Web division creating web-sites for major studios.

2008

Pongo wins an Emmy Award for Disney’s Go.com digital content.

2015

Pongo celebrates its 25th anniversary as an entertainment marketing agency

Top Spots

Five persuasive little gems that epitomize the studio’s best work for its clients **By Todd Longwell**

2 BROKE GIRLS (1)

CBS Television, 2012

With football season ending, CBS used this spot, titled “No Monday Night Football, No Problem,” in an attempt to direct male eyeballs over to the raunchy female comedy. The challenge: the show itself has absolutely nothing to do with football.

“There are always marketing goals, and at the same time you want to wrap it in a package that remains true to the show or its humor,” says Thomas McGough, founder, president and CEO of Pongo.

DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES

ABC Television, 2010

Over-the-top sound effects and Sergio Leone spaghetti Western needle drops combine with cartoon-y CGI-enhanced visuals to sell a season premiere show-down for the inhabitants of Wisteria Lane -- the fictional street located on the Universal lot where the intrigue unfolds.

“The director was not part of our team, but we edited it and did all the sound design and compositing, which added to its theatrical feel,” McGough says.

FAMILY GUY (3)

Twentieth Television, 2013

The goal: convey the “giggity-giggity-goo” fun of the Glenn Quagmire character in 30 seconds. The challenge: to do so in such a way that practically no one will be offended.

“Quagmire is always saying something inappropriate,” says Cary Sachs, chief marketing officer and senior VP of

Pongo. “Using comedic beats, we were able to still use the energy (of the character) without majorly insulting anybody out there.”

SHARK WEEK (2)

Discovery, 2011

Cut to the beat of the Lady Gaga song “Show Me Your Teeth,” this jaws-heavy spot has won fans off-network, racking up more than 1.2 million views on YouTube.

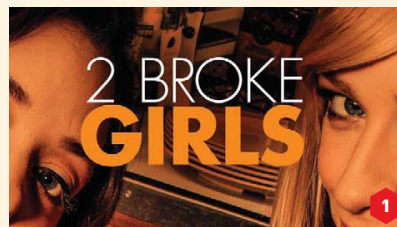
“We wanted to do something different and we had permission from Discovery to do something where they would be paying for the music over and above a needle drop,” McGough says. Before a single image was sourced, a Pongo production assistant was sent on a music search, and came up with the Gaga tune. “The song just drove it,” Sachs says. “It’s one of our favorite moments here at Pongo.”

SHARK TANK (4)

Disney/ABC Domestic Television, 2014

Non-sequitur sound bites from the show’s panel of “shark” investors are intercut with title cards against a plodding synth rock rhythm track to create a spot that’s simultaneously edgy and surreal.

“It’s a show that’s basically talking heads in a dark room, so this is one where you have to go outside normal selling promos, otherwise it starts to get stale and boring,” McGough says. “There aren’t pretty visuals, but word cards perhaps can deliver the marketing message while these people – or sharks – help deliver the drama and the content.”



Tricks of the Trade In comedy and spots, timing is everything **By Todd Longwell**

CLIENTS WANT THEIR 30-second spots crammed with as many jokes as possible. But Pongo founder Tom McGough, says that the number of verbal and visual punch lines isn't as important as the cadence of their delivery.

As the saying goes, timing is everything in comedy.

"Other people might just run the whole thing at the same speed, and think that somehow that's the answer," adds McGough. "But we think it should be like a roller-coaster. You're kind of being pulled, pushed and dragged along on this wonderful ride that has moments where you can stop and take a breath, then speed up, then you go into a lap that allows you to laugh in that moment and enjoy a joke. But how you cut that thing up and figure out the craft of it is the hard part."

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Tom McGough



Another old adage informs Pongo's work: comedy bends and drama breaks.

In a promo for a drama, there might be a fight where someone ends up in the morgue, and "in a comedy promo, somebody gets into a fight and they end up in the emergency room, but at the end of the day he gets the girl," explains senior VP Cary Sachs, "We sort of flirt with disaster in a comedy."

In addition to finely honed comedy

cutting chops, the Pongo team brings a unique joie de vivre to their work, according to frequent client Jill Hotchkiss, VP of marketing and creative for Disney XD at Disney ABC Television Group.

"You watch their work, and you know that they've had fun working on the brand, which really comes through loud and clear every time you see a spot that they've done," Hotchkiss says. "It brings a unique and organic feel to their spots."



CONGRATULATIONS
TOM, CARY AND THE ENTIRE PONGO TEAM

ON YOUR
25TH ANNIVERSARY MILESTONE!

HERE'S WISHING YOU ALL THE BEST FOR THE NEXT 25 YEARS!

DAN HARARY
PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER

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