

Andrea Frazer Paventi

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FUEL and ESPN Collide Into X-Games

ESPN has enlisted the creative minds of FUEL, a Santa Monica based design and solution company, to relaunch the winter and summer image of X-Games – their alternative sports competition, being held this January in Crested Butte, Colorado, and this June in San Francisco.

When ESPN decided to redesign their look, they knew it was no easy task. X-Games, an Olympic spin-off of sorts, features such offbeat categories as snow boarding, ski boarding, snow mountain biking, ice climbing, snow cross, free skiing, mountain biking and skateboarding. ESPN needed a design company whose work could reflect the rebellious and aggressive spirit of these games. After taking pitches from four top-notch design houses, FUEL's unorthodox style and substance won out.

The X-Games package includes a "hallmark" X-Games open, show opens, bumpers, icons, and a variety of unorthodox 3D graphics. According to Jens Gehlhaar, a freelance designer who worked on the project with FUEL's staff, the 3D objects are inspired by the movement of the athletes themselves. The icons are a playful parody of Olympic pictograms. "We used 3D graphing like a dee-jay would use a turn table against it's fundamental use – scratching the record in the process. We went against the manual set," says Gehlhaar.

Vanessa Marzaroli, FUEL's Art Director on the project, admits that they took a risk when originally pitching their concept to ESPN. "We wanted something aggressive, young and new... something not seen before. We wanted to avoid cliches – to have the essence of the athlete adapted in an abstract way." The team specifically created graphics that were idiosyncratic in form. They produced animation that pushed the envelope of traditional shape. The result: a barrage of bold, technicolor, 3D and 2D graphics, that come alive in an explosion of whirling shape and form.

The graphics package is on target for the X-Games which, at its heart, is reminiscent of street culture: high performance moves, style, and lots of youthful, in-your-face-attitude. FUEL will be live at the sidelines to synchronize both their imagery and ESPN's live footage. Thanks to FUEL, X-Games is now a forum where extreme graphics and extreme sports collide.

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FUEL'S CREATIVE TEAM FOR "X-GAMES" INCLUDE:

Creative Director:	Seth Epstein
Producer:	Casey Steele
Art Director:	Vanessa Marzaroli
Designer:	Jonathan Nataro
Designer:	Jen Gehlhaar
Designer:	Bucky Fukumoto
3D Animator:	Aaron Addis
Animator:	Craig Tollifson
Animator:	Lenie Ramos – Ortegaso
Animator:	Brian Yarnell