

# CREATIVITY

## WHY WAIT?

20 DIRECTORS TO KNOW NOW



**Peter Sluszka**  
Hornet Inc.



Director/ animator Peter Sluszka, 35, is old enough to remember when stop-motion animation was considered all but extinct. "There were plenty of times in the last ten years when people have said, 'Hey, listen, you've got to learn CG,'" he says. "You've got to start doing things on the computer or you're not going to survive in this business.' For awhile there was this sense that stop-motion and traditional methods of filmmaking were doomed, and I think maybe there's been a slight backlash to that attitude." Fortunately for Sluszka, he stuck with stop motion long enough to see it come back in style.

The Long Island native's watershed job came in 2004 when he was at Brooklyn's Dancing Diablo Studio and executed the intricate stop-motion effects on Michel Gondry's yarn-based video for the Steriogram track "Walkie-Talkie Man." Sluszka says he met many people who he collaborates with today on that shoot, including Gondry, with whom he has since worked on videos for Devendra Banhart and Kanye West, both of which bend the boundaries of traditional stop-motion by mixing live action footage with pixilation and in-camera compositing techniques. In the Devendra Banhart video "The Ribbon," for example, footage of a shadow was projected onto the animation set to create an eerie, organic effect. "I enjoy traditional stop-motion animation, but I also just enjoy the fact that anything that you can put in front of the camera and manipulate in a very specific frame-by-frame way is stop motion," he says.

Sluszka has also had a fruitful collaboration with director Adria Petty (daughter of Tom) on videos for stellastarr\* and Regina Spektor. More recently, however, Sluszka—who is now repped by Hornet Inc.—has eased into the directing chair himself. His recent projects include traditional stop-motion spots for the G4 network featuring a pair of debauched monkeys and a new, lush video for Spektor, a singer-songwriter whose unadorned and magical melodies make a good match for Sluszka's dream-like creations. "Regina doesn't need a heavily engineered sound to make her music appealing or to refine it," he says. "She pretty much sounds the same in person as she does on her recordings. She can really play and she can really sing. There's no trickery there. Her talents are all out in the open, and you could say the same for someone like Devendra Banhart, and in a way that does mirror the aesthetic of in-camera effects as well. There's something very honest and refreshing about it at times."

He has also remained busy on the commercials front, with recent projects for the United Nations out of Young and Rubicam, for MSN out of AKQA, and a forthcoming holiday campaign for eBay out of BBDO/N.Y. Not bad for a director working in a medium that was supposed to be dead by now. "I think people kind of opened their eyes and realized that CG is another tool to achieve your imaginary, but it's not the only way, and that there's nothing wrong with doing things in a handmade, old-fashioned, well-established way," he says. "And some of those techniques start to look fresh again because they've been shelved for so long in favor of newer technology." (Jim Hanas)