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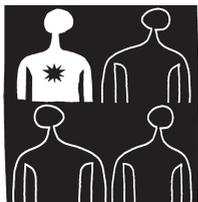
BEST OF SHOW



ewing circle



Collaborative self-promotions aren't unusual in the creative community. But when an Indiana-based illustrator, design firm and printer teamed up to create a homespun promo project, the results were extraordinary. **by Megan Lane**

**BEST OF SHOW**

TITLE
The Red Thread Project

DESIGN FIRM
Planet 10,
Indianapolis
(317)636-7838

**ART DIRECTORS/
DESIGNERS**
Mike and Jennifer
Tuttle/Planet 10

**ILLUSTRATOR/
PHOTOGRAPHER/
COPYWRITER**
Chris Sickels,
Red Nose Studio,
Greenfield, IN;
art@magnet
reps.com

PRINTER/CLIENT
Quality Printing,
Anderson, IN
(800)771-1142

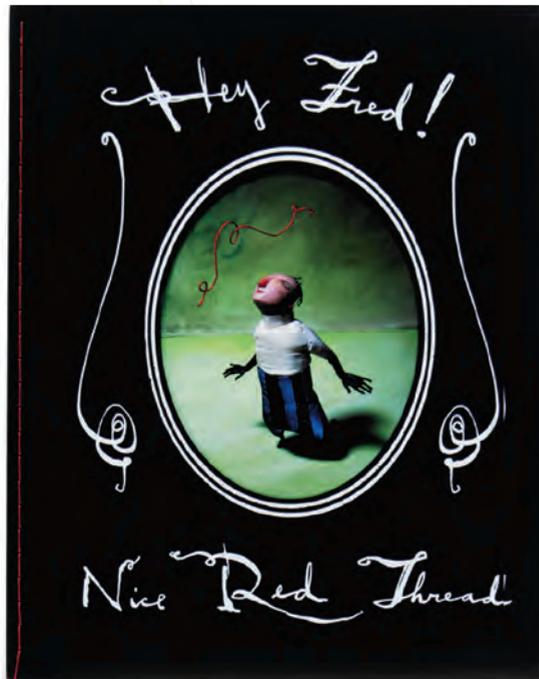
The Red Thread Project first tickled the imagination of illustrator Chris Sickels 35,000 feet above ground, during several trips from his home in Greenfield, IN, to Los Angeles. “I was spending a lot of time in airplanes,” he explains. He couldn’t drag his studio of puppets and backdrops with him, so he brought his sketchbook. “I’d always wanted to write children’s stories, but my writing is horrid,” he says. So he began to write short rhymes.

Back on the ground, Steve Harney, president of Anderson, IN-based Quality Printing, was thinking about doing a new promotion for his business. He approached Planet 10, an Indianapolis design and branding firm he describes as “the best in town.” Firm principals Mike and Jennifer Tuttle were excited to work on a project with their favorite printer. “He’s done 90% of our printing for the last nine years,” Mike says.

But there was still one missing ingredient. The Tuttles wanted to work with a local illustrator or photographer to truly create a homegrown collaborative promotion. They brainstormed a long time before they remembered reading a story about Sickels in the December 2002 issue of HOW.

Sickels says he was a bit skeptical when the Tuttles contacted him with the idea because he’d never worked with Planet 10 or Quality Printing before. Past pro-bono jobs that had promised great exposure and tearsheets never panned out. But it wasn’t long before he realized the potential of the project and joined the team, offering a miniature version of The Red Thread as a jumping-off point.

To highlight Quality Printing’s capabilities, Planet 10 originally planned to print the book on several different paper stocks with a wide array of techniques. But in the end, Harney agreed that using a single stock and a more limited selection of effects would make the piece more of a gift than an over-the-top promotion.



“I love that every spread showcased the printer’s capabilities and how that corresponded with the story,” says competition judge Janelle Swab, senior promotions designer for the HOW Design Conference. “A lot of times, a printer’s promotion will just show a varnish, emboss or deboss, but with this one the highlighted effects matched the story—and I wanted to keep reading.”

For instance, the printer chose a spot gloss UV for a scene that takes place on a rainy night. The text reads: “Shane wanders around in heavy rains wondering about the weightlessness of walnuts in outer-space.” Sickels’ raincoat-clad Shane character tilts his face to the sky to feel the falling drops that have been rendered shiny and slick, like water, by the printing process.



For a spread about a blind character named Andy, the text is accompanied by an embossed Braille translation. And for Ivan, who “flew away in a bucket rigged with fans and rubberbands,” there’s a pop-up that launches his tiny contraption right out of the book. But many of the pages simply feature high-quality four-color printing with a satin aqueous coating. This simple approach complements elegant turns of phrase like, “Milo knows he can beat his shadow. But today his shadow whispers ... ‘I don’t think so.’”

“We see many joint promotions,” says competition judge and HOW editor Bryn Mooth, “but this one works to an astonishing degree. Every component—the illustration, copywriting, design and printing—works in harmony. It’s an enchanting piece, a real keeper, and it shows every participant’s considerable skill to maximum advantage.” **HOW**



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