

The Mill take it to the next level for Nike

Fasten your seatbelts for Nike's action and adrenaline-packed spot The Next Level, promoting the sports brand on screens across the globe in the run-up to Euro 2008.

Directed for advertising, brand strategy and design company 72andsunny by Guy Ritchie, the two-minute film – which features soccer superstars including Cesc Fabregas, Wayne Rooney, Cristiano Ronaldo, Carlos Tevez and Ronaldinho, as well as Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger – represents a major international collaboration between the Mill's offices.

Shot and posted entirely in HD, this ambitious spot features an amateur footballer being fast tracked to the big time, all seen from a first-person point of view and transporting the viewer straight into the thick of the action on and off the pitch, depicting the footwork, the fouls, the goals, and the girls...

Given the schedules of the high-profile talent involved, coordinating the shoot involved military precision and a great deal of patience on the part of production company Anonymous Content, LA and Independent films in London. Filming spanned a month, taking place in London, Manchester and Barcelona, using possibly the world's smallest HD camera – the SI 2K Mini to get to the heart of the action. The Mill's VFX shoot supervisors Hitesh Patel and Austen Humphries played a vital role at this stage, ensuring that all the fx shots and plates – nearly 60 of them – were ready to use in 3D and Flame back at the Mill to create the 'machine-gun energy' Guy had in mind.

The Mill pushed the post production envelope to the extreme on this project, going into some uncharted fx territory, firstly setting up a new data pipeline for the camera (used here for the first time in commercial production) and also for the camera tracking required, in order to track shots previously considered impossible.

Senior Flame artists Giles Cheetham and Chris Knight and senior 3d animators Jordi Bares and Suraj Odedra led the immense VFX work on this project. One of the trickiest tasks for the Flame team was compositing shots that were filmed under different natural lighting conditions. The 2d team also focused on compositing extra elements into the crowd, and re-timing them so that they matched the action on the pitch.

The Final piece in the jigsaw was Adam Scott's data grade. The 2D & 3D work had been undertaken on flat, ungraded images. Using the Baselight in London, with clients online via Minerva in Los Angeles, Adam finished the film to give it a striking saturated look.

The Next Level is two minutes in length, with 90, 60, and 30 second spin-off films also screening.

Product Nike	VFX Shoot Supervisors Hitesh Patel Austen Humphries
Title The Next Level	Lead Flame Giles Cheetham Chris Knight
Agency 72andsunny	Additional Flame Rich Betts Paul Kirch Neil Davies Grant Connor
Executive Producer Sam Baerwald	Flame Assist Paul Downes Ross Goldstein Jeanette Williford
Agency Producer Angelo Ferrugia	Smoke James Pratt
Creative Glenn Cole John Boiler Jason Norcross Bryan Rowles	Shake Becky Porter Pete Hodsman Grainne Freeman Felician di Giorgio
Production Company Anonymous Content Independent Films	3D Lead Supervisor Jordi Bares
Director Guy Ritchie	Massive TD Suraj Odedra
Executive Producer Dave Morrison	3D Animators Sergio Xisto Robert Holmes Luke Tickner Martin Contel Daniel Marum Meng Yang Lu James Spillman Richard Costin Telecine Adam Scott
Producer Aris McGarry	Combustion Sharon Marcussen
DP David Higgs	On-Set Final Cut & Data Mgr Daniel Budin
Editing Company Spotwelders	Data Transfers David J Phillips
Editor Robert Duffy	Kit Baselight Inferno Massive Xsi Shake 3D Equalizer Maya
VFX The Mill	
Senior Producer Liz Browne	
Deputy Executive Producer Helen Hughes	
Production Coordinator Arielle Davis Miles Pettit	
Executive Producers Gabrielle Gourrier Stephen Venning	