INFORMATION SOCIETY

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The state of the Digital Media industry in the British Isles

The British Isles, an area that has been defining trends and style for hundreds of years – having spread its cultural influence all over the globe in everything from language to music and litterature. It should come as no surprise that this is also one of the central hubs of the Digital Media industry, with design agencies popping up in London like flowers on a field, or some kind of weed in your garden.

Analysing the market of Digital Media in the British Isles can be a difficult task – you need to be able to separate the mediocre from the fantastic, and the old from the up-and-coming, but we have done our best to find some of the more interesting Digital Media companies in the region, as well as find out what the current and future trends are and present them here.

Companies

London

Agency.com
Location: London
Web address: www.agency.com
Areas active within: Web
Clients: British Airways, Sainsbury's Bank, T-Mobile

Big Active
Location: London
Web adress: www.bigactive.com
Founded: 1990 by Gerard Saint, Mark Watkins and Paul Hetherington
Area active within: Illustration, Motion, Print
Clients: Beck, Goldfrapp, Basement Jaxx

de-construct
Location: London
Web address: www.de-construct.com
Contact person: Simon Waterfall
Areas: web, motion
Clients: Adidas, Panasonic
Intership: Many previous Hyper Island students as both interns and employees
Additional information: Only temporary site availible right now.

Delete
Location: London
Web adress: www.deletelondon.com
Founded: 2003
Area active within: Web, Motion, Branding
Clients: Reebok, Sony Playstation, V2 Music, Renault
Size: 23 employees

The Designers Republic
Location: London
Web address: www.thedesignersrepublic.com
Clients: Jarvis, MTV, Nickelodeon, NIN, Orange, Pringles, Pulp, Supergrass, Swatch, Telia, Wip3out

Digit
Location: London
Web address: www.digitlondon.com
Founded: 1996, Nottingham
Areas: web, physical interaction
Clients: vodafone, Bullrun, Stella McCartey, Sky+, Coca-Cola Zero, Motorola
Intership: Seems to be interested in interns according to the "Why Hyper Island"-video

GR/DD
Location: London
Web adress: www.grdd.co.uk
Clients: Symantec, The British Library, BMG Music, Sky

Hi-Res!
Location: London
Web address: www.hi-res.net
Areas: web, motion
Clients: Beck, The Fountain Movie & Book, Night At the Museum (20th Century Fox), DIESEL, Ugly Betty
Additional information: Only temporary site availible right now.

AKQA

Location: London
Web address: www.akqa.com
Areas: web, e-commerce, mobile, usability and Interface Design Solutions
Clients: Coca-Cola, Dell, ESPN, Fiat, Gucci, McDonalds, Microsoft, Windows Live, Nike, Orange, Sky, Smirnoff, Sprite, Visa, Xbox
Additional information: 2007 Agency of the year UK & US

Independent advertising agency AKQA was founded 1995 in San Francisco, USA, and have since opened branches in Washington D.C., New York, London, Amsterdam and Shanghai. AKQA specialize in interactive advertising, striving to be at the top of the game through concentrating on innovation and ideas-led solutions for some of the world's most well-known brands. Currently employing around 600 people the company is one of the top players in their field, and have won numerous awards, including Revolution Magazine's Agency of the Decade 97-07 award.

The agency has in the last couple of years worked to establish themselves as a full-service agency, handling a variety of different interactive services such as digital products, content and services for the mobile platform, e-commerce and interface design. In August AKQA acquired SearchRev, performance leader in search engine marketing, to improve their online marketing solutions.

AKQA's client list include Coca-Cola, Nike, Unilever, Visa and Target. The agency got lots of exposure when developing the interface for Microsoft's gaming console Xbox 360. The company is headed by CEO Tom Bedecarré, an entrepreneur with a background in the advertising industry, Chairman Ajaz Ahmed, recognized for his innovative skills, Chief Financial Officer Tim Pierce who has held senior positions in a variety of companies, and President of Interactive Advertising Andrew O'Dell who last year replaced Kate Everett-Thorp, considered one of the highest-profile executives in interactive media.
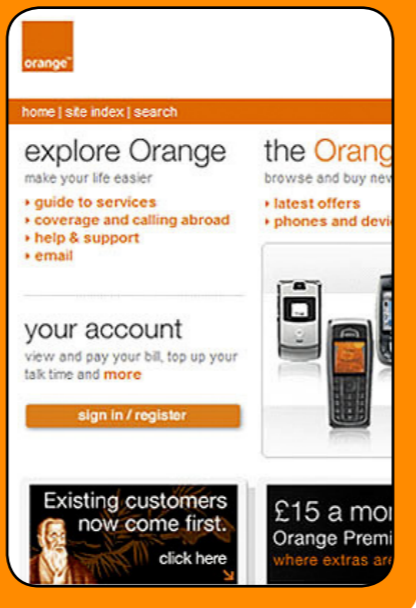
Foreign Office
Location: London
Web address: www.foreignoffice.com
Area: Motion
Clients: MTV, VH1, Universal Studios, Nickelodeon

MadeThought
Location: London
Web address: www.madethought.com
Areas: brand identity, art-direction, packaging, printed matter, interactive design
Clients: Nokia, Stella McCartey, Nike

Mook
Location: London
Web address: www.mook.co.uk
Founded: 1999
Areas: web, digital marketing, new media
Clients: BBC, Big Active, Channel 4, Diesel, Disney, EMI Music, MTV Networks Europe, Nickelodeon Europe, PlayStation, Reuters, Sony BMG, Yahoo!

Mother
Location: London
Web address: www.motherlondon.com

NB: Studio
Location: London
Web adress: www.nbstudio.co.uk
Founded: 1997
Area: Web
Clients: Tate Britain, Schweppes

NOWWASHYOURHANDS
Location: London
Web adress: www.nowwashyourhands.com
Areas: Web, Motion, Branding
Clients: BBC, MTV, Nickelodeon

Poke
Location: London
Web address: www.pokelondon.com
Contact person: Simon Waterfall
Clients: TopShop, American Express RED, Yahoo!, Orange, Mother London, J.Lindeberg, Top Gear, Oxfam
Intership: Many previous Hyper Island students as both interns and employees

R/GA
Location: London
Web address: www.rga.com
Founded: 1977
Areas: Digital Branding, Systematic Deisgn, Multichannel Marketing, Online Advertising, E-Commerce, Technology
Clients: Bank of AMerica, Electrolux, Federal Reserve, Hilton, IBM, Levi's, Nestlé, Nike, Nokia, NYC 2012, Reuters, Sharp, Subaru, Target
Size: 500 employees
Additional information: Headquarters in NYC

LATERAL

Location: London
Web address: www.lateral.net
Founded: 1999
Areas: web, digital communication
Clients: Levi's Europe, Nintendo UK, Amnesty International, RSPCA, Faber & Faber
Size: 26 full-timers, some interns
Intership: Yes

Lateral was founded in 1997 by Simon Crab, Jon Bains and David Jones. They are defining themselves as a digital communication agency, working with different types of media in the marketing, creativity and technology area. They also have expertise in the mobile phone, interactive TV, DVD and back end development area. Lateral mostly work with clients having to face consumers to develop their online presence, strategies and campaigns. One of the focal points for Lateral is their urge to collaborate, according to themselves they are a very collaborative agency. Infact they co-founded the network 'The Cluster'. 'The Cluster' is a collaborative network only consisting of new media companies with a strong will to keep their specialisation and skill set. Lateral is also involved in the pure technology based network 'Lshift'. Due to Lateral's long time in the business they have an impressive set of clients and projects. Although reffering to their site they have a too big list to make it easy for users to find what they're looking for. Some of the current clients are Levi Strauss & Co, Nintendo, RSPCA, Amnesty International. Lateral have won several awards during the years in the industry. Some of the most noticeable are the under the Levi Strauss account with several award winners during the years. With projects like Flat-Eric, 1999, Twisted, 2001, eu.levi.com, 2003 and Antidote 2006. ▶▶▶

Simon Crab, one of the founders of Lateral is currently a Creative Director at the company. Ever since the eighties Simon has been working with digital media. During 1990 Simon started a digital arm at Wace, focusing on mutlimedia. Thus working with CD-ROM design and production for clients like Lego, British Airways and The Body Shop. 1993 Simon left Wace, to start at Obsolete, a photo-internet pioneering collective. At the time when Obsolete imploded Simon went to co-found Lateral with Jon Bains and David Jones, also Obsolete crew members. Jon Bains has been a regular Internet user since the late 80's. During the mid 90's he published the first desktop fanzine, and also created UK's first online fanzine. Jon countinued by winning Radio 1's first website ever and also the website for the first Internet TV programme. Bains is regularly featured as a spokesman and visionary for the whole new media industry by the press.

theOTHERmedia

Location: London
Web address: www.othermedia.com
Contact person: Jonathan Briggs
Areas: web (e-commerce, Content Management Systems)
Clients: Luminar, Abbey Box Office, BAFTA, Virgin,
Intership:

The Other Media was found in 1994 and are currently based in London Bridge. They now have 32 staffmembers and their employees are 5 directors, 9 developers, 6 design and user interface, 7 project managers, 3 marketing, 2 system admin, 1 financial, 1 design intern.

They focus on the web-business and work with things as content management, e-commerce, communities, Search Engine Optimization and web design for existing brands. The Other Media always think about the functionality in first hand, that the website loads quick and that it is completely trouble-free, etc. They never do websites completely in flash for example, because they think it is a waste of marketing, since a Flash website is difficult to optimize for search engines. The Other Media's connection to Hyper Island is Jonathan Briggs who is one of the founders of the school.
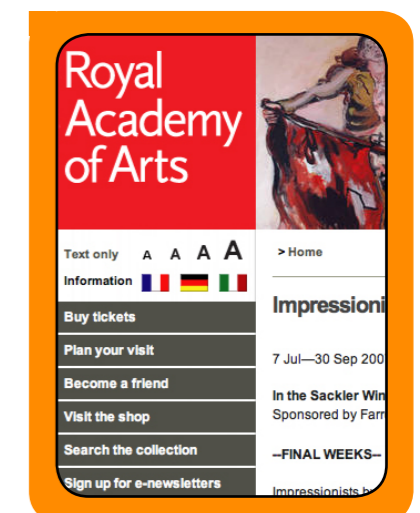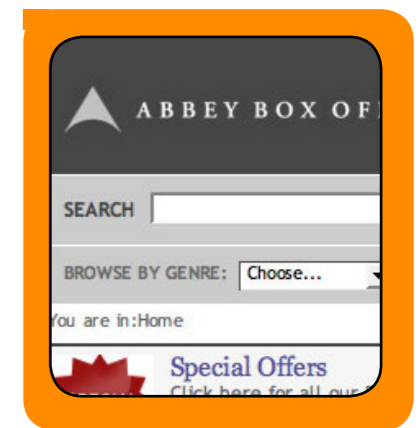
Research Studios
Location: London
Web adress: www.researchstudios.com
Founded: 1994 by Neville Brody and Fwa Richards
Clients: Salomon, The Guardian, Bentley

Up The Resolution
Location: London
Web address: www.uptheresolution.co.uk
Areas: Motion, Print
Clients: BBC, MTV, Lex Records, Ninjatune, Skype

Unit9
Location: London
Web address: www.unit9.com
Areas: web, "interactive storytelling"
Clients: Capcom, Channel4, Eidos, Eurostar, Evian, Gucci, Honda, Namco, Nissan, Nintendo, Sony, Virgin, Vodafone

Wieden+Kennedy
Location: London
Web adress: www.wk.com
Clients: Nike, Nokia, Pizza Hut, Visa

Wyld Stallyons
Location: London
Web address: www.wyldstallyons.com
Contact person: Jason Arber
Founded: October 2006 by Richard May, Chris Sayer, Jason Arber and Ian Trisk-Grove
Areas: Motion (for the music video, broadcast and advertising industries)
Clients: MTV, VH1, Pixelsurgeon, ITV

Roles: 60% multi-tasking creatives, 20% accountant, 20% project manager
Size: 6 employees
Additional information: Have never worked with hyper students, but have heard about Hyper Island through Pixelsurgeon for the last seven years.

Outside London

Orange UK
Location: Bristol
Web adress: www.orange.co.uk
Founded: 1994 by Hutchison Whampoa
Areas: Mobile products and services, Web

Clusta
Location: Birmingham
Web address: www.clusta.com
Contact person: -
Areas: Web, Motion
Clients: Smirnoff, Pioneer Pro DJ, The Carphone Warehouse

DED Assoc.
Location: Sheffield
Web address: www.dedass.com
Founded: In 1991 by Jon and Nik Daughtry
Areas: Motion, Web, Print
Clients: Nissan, MTV, Tate Liverpool, Universal Records

Ireland

Frequency Design Studio
Location: Cork, Ireland
Web adress: www.frequency.ie
Areas: Web, Print
Clients: Fujitsu Siemens, Dublin Institute Of Design

Guerilla
Location: Galway, Ireland
Web address: www.guerilla.ie
Founded: 2003
Areas: Web, Print, Branding
Clients: Irish Poker Events

Newmedia
Location: Dublin, Ireland
Web address: www.newmedia.ie
Founded: 1996
Areas: Web
Clients: Toyota, O2
Size: 5 employees

Trends

We have found that the Digital Media industry is a business that – obviously – makes tremendous advances every year. We see that trends can come and pass in months rather than years, and even people within the industry apparently find it difficult to make predictions. They still try their best, however, in order to stay on top of (or at least cling on to) the rest of the business.

Jonathan Briggs, founder of The Other Media and professor at Kingston University, is convinced that one of the coming developments is the increased importance of Ajax, which will change the way webpages are developed from multi-page to single-page layouts with selective loading. We see that this might cause issues before the new standard is introduced to the general public, specifically when dealing with web-adverts and banners where payment may be based on page-views – since use of Ajax means that a site that would previously generate several page loads now only generates one. This concern is also voiced by Sean Chambers – previously Strategic Lead at Poke London, now Planning Director and Co-founder of Kong Amsterdam – who describes the issues of introducing Ajax by noting how a web designer might remake his site using Ajax and suddenly lose a lot of income from banners, the advertising company noticing that his number of page views has dropped.

Briggs also believes that video will take a larger role within the Digital Media industry. If this happens (which we believe is very likely), the lines between different markets will begin to blur. Just like how print companies previosly transformed into digital design companies with the introduction of a computerized work process, we believe that design agencies will now be able to envelop yet another channel as they gain the ability to produce TV and film-worthy material.

"We're gonna disagree more," says Briggs, referring to the different markets and how design agencies will begin to step on some quite big toes. While it seems likely that several design agencies and studios will be attracted to the concept of having full control of all forms of media within their office walls, Sean Chambers hold a diametrically opposed view. In Kong, he and Yacco Vijn have adopted a concept of outsourcing practically all their production while they stand for the creative process alone. Both views have interesting arguments, and we think that it will take some time for the industry to decide which type of organisation works best, and for the coming years we have a feeling that we will see companies of both kind establish themselves. Primarily major multinational design agencies will find it easier to absorb talent rather than outsource, while smaller or new-founded companies will be able to develop a creative outsourcing model.

As head of a company dealing largely with e-commerce, Jonathan Briggs has had the opportunity to see how the concept of internet shopping has grown. He has found when comparing the effectivity of different "generations" of websites that the websites of certain companies today generate several times more revenue than what they did only one or two years ago. We theorize that this might be due to a greater social acceptance of e-commerce and purchasing items by credit card payments. Due to this, Briggs says that it is now actually important for a company that they are getting good business out of their site.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Digital Media industry might be facing some interesting challenges in the coming years. Ajax and similar new solutions to site structurization might call for a new standard of measuring traffic within a site, possibly paving a path for future changes in the established structure of how to interact with the back-end of the web.

Design Agencies will absorb the medium of video, slowly intruding on the market of TV-producing studios. Meanwhile, fresh think-tanks will be started up to rely solely on outside expertise, making use of the best studios in every field to possibly rival the agencies with everything in-house.

E-commerce is likely to continue a steady growth, and as companies grow more interested in their opportunities online, so will their actual knowledge of how the web functions.

It's possible, and even likely that we will see some schisms within the industry the coming years, as new standards are decided, but it will be interesting times to be a part of, and we believe that the students of Hyper Island are in a perfect position to have an influence on the outcome of these mini-revolutions.