

STOCK FOOTAGE

Backgrounds Come to the Production Forefront

by Leslie Halpern

Earth, wind and fire. Rain, sleet and snow. Lions, tigers and bears. You name it, you can probably find it on a stock background. With so many colorful, high-tech options for static and motion backgrounds, advertising agencies, corporate presenters, television broadcasters, production companies, religious organizations and other multimedia creators aren't limited to the standard yellow text on a blue background anymore. Today's stock backgrounds serve as an adaptable art form that can add distinctive style to any presentation.

Offering solutions and style

Phoenix-based **12 Inch Design** provides tools for motion graphics, including ProductionBlox, the company's building-blocks library of royalty-free motion graphics with animated backgrounds and matching elements for video and postproduction professionals.

"We create animated backgrounds and related bits and pieces on a royalty-free basis so that anybody from video editors to corpo-

rate professionals to video producers can get whatever they need," says Vice President of Sales and Marketing Nicholas Napp. "We're trying to be a graphics-department-in-a-box for editors so they have a place to start instead of having to create everything themselves."

In addition to convenience and value, stock backgrounds offer something else for producers looking to jazz up their content: a unique sense of style. Baldwin, Maryland's **Reel One Media** is a video/special effects production company that opened its BackSlaps Shop nearly three years ago to provide cutting-edge, royalty-free video backgrounds with seamlessly looping broadcast-quality animations which allow clients to overlay their own titles to make unique presentations.

"After years of providing animation services to corporations, we decided to package some of those animations together and sell the BackSlaps," says Vice President of Marketing and Creative Content Dave Streb. "We've just produced the one volume and are working on another."

But even with stock backgrounds available, BackSlaps' customers usually "want something more custom made," Streb points out. "Rather than pushing the mass-market, royalty-free backgrounds, we use the BackSlaps as a base and then custom-make something for clients." Modification or customization of its stock motion backgrounds form the bulk of BackSlaps' business.

Design departments at your fingertips

You might expect the larger Fortune 500 companies, music-video producers, and popular resorts and theme parks to take advantage of stock backgrounds but even small businesses like schools, wedding videographers, religious groups and hobbyists are fans. Many of these products have been selling like hotcakes.



Reel One Media — left: *BackSlaps Volume 2 - Light Fantastic*; above: *Composite using a background from BackSlaps Volume 1*