

Passport Signs Dirs. Michael Grasso, Joel Marsden

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SANTA MONICA, Calif., January 27, 2011, --- Passport Films, a Santa Monica production house headed by owners/executive producers David and Patti Coulter, has added directors Michael Grasso and Joel Marsden to its roster. Marsden gains his first spot representation stateside, while Grasso is a commercialmaking veteran whose history spans such venerable former companies as Lovinger/Grasso/Cohn and Omaha Pictures, having been a principal in both. Grasso's more recent affiliations include Socket Films and prior to that his shop Snug.

Grasso is a two-time Directors Guild of America (DGA) Award nominee in the commercials category, and his work has garnered such honors as a Gold Lion at the Cannes International Advertising Festival. He has directed over the years for such clients as IBM, American Airlines, Nestle, Delta Airlines, Southwest airlines, Anheuser-Busch, Coors, Miller Brewing Co., Pontiac, American Express, Visa, U.S.

Army, Kelloggs, Ford, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Lexus, Toyota, HBO, Honda, Sears, Merck, Mazda, JCPenney, Home Depot and Blue Cross. Grasso's spotmaking reach extends beyond the U.S.; he has directed commercials in China, France, Italy, Germany, England, South Africa, Australia and Argentina.

Grasso's most recent ongoing project is a full-length feature film, *The Umbrella Man*. Last year he and his brother, DP Joe Grasso, adapted the screenplay for the stage. The feature film version is scheduled to begin shooting this spring.

Joel Marsden

Marsden is adept in live action and animation (including such disciplines as CGI, 2D and stop motion)--and combinations thereof. His campaign for the 400th anniversary of *Don Quijote* earned the best animation award from the Association of Advertising Production Companies in Spain. He is repped for commercials in Spain by Tesauero, with much of his spot work done during an earlier eight-year stretch at Bus Productions which handled him through their offices in Madrid, Barcelona and Buenos Aires.

Writer/producer/director Marsden is also no stranger to longer-form fare. His feature documentary *World Vote Now* won the Democracy Video Challenge 2010, a global competition sponsored by the U.S. State Department, YouTube, NBC Universal, the Motion Picture Association of America, NYU and USC, among others. *World Vote Now*, which explores the idea and possibility of global democracy, was shot over eight years in 26 countries, sometimes with the risk of personal peril. The film debuted at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam and has gone on to be showcased at the Amnesty International Human Rights Festival, the Klimaforum in Copenhagen, the Directors Guild in Los Angeles, inside the European Parliament in Brussels and at the United Nations' headquarters in New York.

Marsden, who recently moved to Los Angeles, additionally has to his directorial credit the feature film *Ill-Gotten Gains*, which follows an uprising aboard an illegal American slave ship in 1869. Released theatrically in the U.S., the film has been screened at assorted festivals and events such as the Pan-African Film Festival, the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Human Rights Declaration, and at the Black Filmmakers Foundation.

The director is also a video artist who has had his work exhibited at notable venues. These include the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery where a special installation was centered around the stop-frame animation for Marsden's video art piece, Jimmy Rage's "Abre la Puerta."

