

LOOKING BACK LOOKING FORWARD

By Kate Siegel

How do you know it's 2009? Someone uses the phrase "in this economy" accompanied by a complaint or an apology. But despite the obvious challenges, this year wasn't all bad. As a country, we made great progress on some issues. We got more and better 3G gadgets. We got enough rain to stall the drought here in Georgia. We got a new Star Trek movie that was zesty.

Checking in with some Atlanta creatives who shared their reflections on the months just passed and the near future, they're realistic and optimistic. The business of life goes on, and so does life in business. We keep doing what we do best: Being creative. Doing more with less. Making metaphorical lemonade.



B.A. Albert, President & Chief Creative Officer, Grey

B.A. ALBERT PRESIDENT & CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER, GREY

Grey Group ranks among the largest global marketing communications companies, represented in 96 countries, with 432 offices operating in 154 cities.

The day before our new business pitch for PODS, the portable container company, we discovered that an art director here knew one of the fellows that was washing our windows. We called his cell as he was outside our offices on the 40th floor and asked if we could get him to help us. He did. It was timed perfectly: As the client walked into the room the next day, the window washer rose up and held up the sign. They laughed really hard and loved it.



Grey shows a potential client where their business could go in the future.

As far as next year goes, we are hoping to rise to new heights, just like the sign says. And have some fun doing it.

CHRIS HALL
PRESIDENT & CEO, BBDO ATLANTA
BBDO Atlanta is the city's largest advertising agency, with 200+ employees and clients such as AT&T, ING, REI and the Georgia Lottery. BBDO Atlanta is part of the BBDO Worldwide network.

Certainly anyone working in any area of media is aware of how challenging the past year has been and how much things are changing within social media and the interactive field in general. Sometimes it seems like if you look away for even an instant the landscape has been altered. But in all that change lies opportunity. Our job is to figure out what lies ahead, and looking at the past is one way we do that. Here are some of the things that caught my attention.

Ashton Kutcher beat out CNN in the Great Twitter Challenge of 2009, the first Tweet-er to reach 1 million followers. My prediction for most followed in 2010? Let's just say Larry King needs to make a comeback.

"Crank That" by Soulja Boy was one of the most watched YouTube videos this year with 356+ million views.

Andy Warhol was wrong when he said everyone will get 15 minutes of fame, at least when it comes to some Atlanta housewives. I expected our fiery southern women to make the other "Real Housewives" shows look timid, and "The Real Housewives

of Atlanta" didn't disappoint. But who could have expected it to become the highest-rated cable program in its time slot?

Some of my favorite stories of 2009 were about iPhone apps and the way they have opened up technology to people from all corners of the world. I think I read the other day of a 9-year-old boy in Singapore who's developed his own app that allows other kids to create drawings on their iPhones.

Speaking of social media: There are now more than 350,000 active applications on Facebook. Two billion photos are uploaded to the site every month. More than 6 billion minutes are spent on Facebook each day, worldwide. Staggering numbers, to be sure, and they will only increase in 2010. My personal goal for 2010? It's a bit more modest — I vow to crush three drug lords on "Mafia Wars."

LIZ STUBBS
Independent producer for webcasts and short or long-form video/film, a non-fiction author and a documentary photographer.

2009 has been dramatically different from 2008, but despite the scary headlines and budget cuts, it has been a year of happy accidents and unexpected opportunities to pursue projects I'm passionate about.

The standout project for me this year was a piece I lucked into, producing a video about one of the victims of the 2008 Savannah sugar refinery fire. Our subject has such an amazingly positive spirit, he is an inspiration to everyone who interacts with him. He and his story were so impactful to us on so many levels that we are currently in the early stages of pre-



Liz Stubbs, Independent Producer

production for a documentary on the larger story.

I feel 2010 will be a more optimistic year, which will hopefully free up more production purse strings. But, I am grateful for the financial landscape change this year. Creativity often needs challenging circumstances to come into full bloom. Since several steady clients have curtailed their needs from last year, it's been a great opportunity to make my own work. My photography is transitioning into a legitimate business ... I'm partnering on a 2010 calendar project ... and I will be going to press this fall with my fourth book, the second I've co-authored on values.

While I'm optimistic about 2010, I don't see it as returning to business as usual, whatever that has been. I see it as a year to nudge previous boundaries, take more creative risks, and in all projects, get to the heart of the matter.



Is it luck, good fortune, or fate that brings people together? Like minds somehow seem to find each other.

Many jobs and a million stories I'll take from 2009: Laughing in the studio, creating music tracks with Raja Raj. Battling a fierce wind in an open field shooting handheld. Skater dolly in the 'Hootch. Slide-style crop circles with Andy Sapp. Chasing racecars through city streets, foreign tracks and the Mojave desert. Climbing rocks with Will Roegge. Traveling through India with two great friends, counting our blessings but realizing the unnecessary materialistic bubble of western life. Reconnecting with old allies and making new ones. Building our team and adding new services.

Bring on 2010. We're just finding second gear.

**TOM ODER
PRESIDENT, WORLDWIDE EDITING
SENIOR ASSOCIATE,
PEARLMAN ASSOCIATES**

Worldwide Editing is a global provider of writing, editing and business communications services. Pearlman Associates has helped a multitude of Atlanta-area, national and international clients achieve business-to-business goals for more than three decades.

My career coach helped me craft an elevator speech in case I ever found myself in an elevator for 15 seconds with someone important. My mother taught me to always be kind to others. I'm glad I paid attention to both.

I didn't develop the elevator speech until after I retired from Cox Newspapers in December 2008, so I didn't come away from an unexpected encounter



*Tripp Rhame, Director/
Director of Photography, Spitfire Studios*

**TRIPP RHAME
DIRECTOR/DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY,
SPITFIRE STUDIOS**

Spitfire Studios is an Atlanta-based full-service production company that specializes in combining creative execution with technical precision.

with Barack Obama in an elevator in the Hyatt in Austin earlier that year with a high-level government post. He was a senator from Illinois at the time and in Austin for a debate with then-Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton before the Texas Democratic presidential primary.

However, holding an elevator door open for Marilyn Pearlman of Pearlman Associates at the Commerce Club in downtown Atlanta where we were attending an Atlanta Press Club meeting has paid wonderful dividends. Since then, we have begun capitalizing on her 30+ years of experience in owning and operating a Decatur public relations firm and my 30+ years of journalism experience and new writing and editing business. We are partnering on half a dozen projects and have developed a delightful friendship.

Our special blend of talent and experience and love for helping people tell their story and spread their message has impressed prospective clients. Several have said that because of the economy they'll have to wait until next year to take advantage of our services. We tell them graciously that we understand and that we'll stay in touch. Our belief is that the economic storm clouds will break next year. When they do, we'll have new clients to add to those we are already helping.

In the meantime, we'll look for a few elevator doors to open. You never know who might come along for the ride.

**LISA CAMPBELL
MEDIA CONSULTANT, PR & MARKETING
TECHNOLOGIST, NEW MEDIA DEVELOPER**
Lisa Campbell MEDIA is an unorthodox company helping businesses, corporations and entrepreneurs create identities and brands that target customers to communicate in a very different way.

After working in radio and television in several major markets around the country, I've finally agreed

with my friends who say that I'm a woman with Ballz. I recently took a hiatus from the "traditional" news business, which I loved, to try something exciting and new. Launching a company to develop what I call Promotional docuMEDIA film shorts using typography, photography, broadcast quality produced and edited audio, psychology, technology and culture. I've essentially created a new form of the PBS-style documentary that corporate clients use in all forms of social media.

What I learned in 2009 was that not all projects are exciting, as presented. I'd accepted one assign-

ment for a commercial real estate company that I just couldn't wrap my head around. Boring. Every time I thought about it, I yawned. That engagement taught me two things: One, that we should never take any project simply for the money, and two, what makes the work "fun" is the ideas that I bring. I had to change my mind about the work and then the work changed me. Find passion and joy in all that you do, and you'll never "work" another day in your life and have incredible successes to boot.

I predict that we'll see a lot more "gigging" in the years ahead.

Many people who once worked in corporate environments and have been fired or laid off due to the economy are now actually enjoying working independent gigs. Once the jitters of "How am I going to survive?" wear off and faith kicks in, people are really learning how to manage on their own. It's quite gratifying to watch.

Personally, I'll keep blogging on Facebook and other sites, and I've got two publishing projects in the works for 2010: "The Brilliance of Branding Barack" on the marketing that won the presidency for Obama and how entrepreneurs can use his methodologies, and an inspirational book for business executives called "STATUS ... an update on faithbook."



Lisa Campbell, Media Consultant

STEVE MANK
PARTNER, PRIMAL SCREEN
SUSAN SHIPSKY
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, PRIMAL SCREEN
With keen insight into the world of branding, Primal Screen has produced work for television, film, the web and environmental media, having a particular affinity for children's entertainment.

Upheaval! What clients want, how they work, even the market they serve have all become so unpredictable, so seemingly random, that we can't divine the trajectory. For instance, one of our biggest jobs in the past year has been the creation of an online game for a cereal popular with kids. The game is cutting edge in many ways: It's a fast 3-D shooter



Steve Mank, Partner, Primal Screen

that explores large worlds, all online and in-browser. But most remarkable is that Primal Screen is not really a game design studio. We didn't get the work because we suddenly became programmers. We got it because we distill brands. What has changed is that as clients become more savvy about their brand and about expressing it in as many arenas as possible, they look more and more to studios like ours.

Certainly the sagging economy is partly responsible for the shifts that we're experiencing. Money is a little scarcer, and clients are trying to find new and creative ways to grab some. But this kind of innovation also owes a lot to the web. Twenty-five years of AOL could not have predicted the pandemic spread of Facebook. So there's no extrapolating the next big thing. The best we can do is to work hard, hold on tight, and surf the avalanche with all the style we can muster.

THOM GONYEAU
PRINCIPAL, MOUNTAIN VIEW GROUP, LTD.
With offices in Atlanta and New York, Mountain View is an award-winning strategic and creative partner specializing in moving communications: Film, video and digital media.

We were on a shoot up in the Northeast for a large, multinational company. They had called us in last-minute to put together a video presentation for them. One of the interviewees, a bigwig in corporate communications, walked into the studio and looked at the set-up: The backdrop, the cameras, the lights ... and then she laughed and shook her head. She said something to the effect of, "I can't believe there are still people like you trying to make a living in the production business. Who does shoots like this anymore?" Suffice it to say, that kind of deflated our attitude for the rest of the day, to say the least.

Right now, we're working on a large-scale project for a client in the financial (er, bailout) industry. We didn't shoot a frame of the imagery or content. Instead, we shipped out a dozen Flip cameras and had consumers send us footage to include in the campaign and also encouraged them to upload a bunch of digital stills. The role of the production company of the future could be managing digital assets in the creation of marketing communications and advertising. We'll see this more and more and more, with a focus on user-generated content.

As 2009 comes to a close, we're seeing a pretty huge uptick in the number of calls from clients. It feels like we've turned the corner and companies are ready to spend dollars again. We might not see the larger budgets of the past, but there is still a need to communicate with stakeholders, customers, employees ... that's not going away. We may be tweaking how we execute and what expertise we bring to the table, but we are feeling pretty good about the near future, and it would appear that clients are ready to do business once again.

**HAVANA NGUYEN
FREELANCE GRAPHIC DESIGNER,
KOKOROGRAPHIX**

2009 has been a big year. People are often surprised that I am only 22 and I am already running my own business. I started freelancing as a graphic designer this year, and it's changed my life. I went from feeling like I was just a product of the surrounding events to feeling in charge of the outcome of my life. I went from desperately giving in at every negotiation to realizing my personal value and setting my own prices. I went from a simple college student who looked for the safest major to a student who pursues her true ambitions and gets things rolling.

My biggest lesson? Just do it. Seriously. Stop over-thinking and see what steps you can take *today* to reach your goals, whether it's registering for a business license or simply getting out there and talking to people. I started with a modest blog documenting little projects I did in my free time. I sent out a Craigslist ad for pro bono work to build up my network and portfolio. I set out to meet and learn from community business leaders. Hopefully, this will pay off in 2010 by expanding my clientele and digging into different niches. I want to become the go-to graphic designer for promotional illustration.

**JAN LEGO
VICE PRESIDENT, TUCKER-CASTLEBERRY
PRINTING**

Commercial printer connecting and integrating print, marketing and social interaction for the future of communication.

2009 was challenging for all traditional commercial printers, as large corporations were getting rid of marketing positions and print buyers. To rise to the challenge, we started the year by trying to understand how to tie printing and marketing and social networking together. Adding a Kodak Nexpress digital press to our complement of equipment enabled us to print personalized pieces as well as the static pieces that were too small for our 40" presses. Now we are producing PURLs (personalized web addresses to customized sites) and helping clients capture information from the data we receive from those PURL hits. And we are creating storefronts and web-to-print applications.

One of the sexiest applications of our Nexpress is a dimensional coating unit. This gives us the ability to produce not just raised type, like thermography, but to also add texture to the printed piece. You see a lizard, and you can feel his skin too. Well, maybe an orange would be a better example to think of.

We're excited about using our new toys and technology in 2010 as more people become aware of our capabilities and their potential.

**DON & PARLEE CHAMBERS
STUDIO CHAMBERS**

Commercial photography and videography studio where talent, skill and a happy atmosphere brew up amazing imagery.

So apparently ... and we just recently learned this ... 2009 was the year of the ox. Or cow.

Well, we'd say that "bovine" pretty much sums up the aimless, cud-chewing job market of 2009. Further, purchasing our *own* cow and taking up residence on a small farm was, at times, under serious consideration. Don't laugh. But fortunately for us, the farm seemed to show up at Studio Chambers' doorstep via our clients. We had chickens (on shoulders), people tossing whole hams (lots of hams), fresh produce popping from coat pockets, fish being used as a telephone device (don't ask), and the ever-popular wagon full of puppies (you know, for a pharmaceutical ad, of course). We were fortunate that all of this and more found its way in front of our camera's lens and helped to put some bacon in our pan and bread in the bank.

2009? Done. And we are still in the biz.

For the record, the studio's only permanent livestock to date consists of Halo the golden retriever.

Next year? Well, you should know that 2010 is the year of the tiger. The Chinese define it with courage, self-reliance, friendliness, hopefulness and resilience. Enough said. See you in 2010.



Don and Parlee Chambers, Studio Chambers