

Sustaining Big Projects through Small Gigs

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A trend toward online documentary-style commercials might be a good source of supplemental income for filmmakers.

Filmmakers like Dave Jackel are meeting the growing demand for documentary-style online commercials.

A machine's dial turns, and a white powder is added to a spinning beaker of water as a woman's voice overhead talks about toothpaste and animal testing. It looks like a documentary you might find on PBS, but instead, it's a commercial for Tom's of Maine.

Producer Gita Pullapilly and Director Aron Gaudet, of Dungby Productions, were working on their latest film, *The Way We Get By*, in Bangor, Maine, when they were approached by Tom's, a company known for its natural products, to do a series of commercials for its website. In order to highlight the company's environmental consciousness and support of volunteerism, Tom's wanted the commercials to have a documentary-type feel to them.

According to Pullapilly, shooting the documericals was a good experience because the filmmakers were given free reign to not only document the inner workings of the company, but also pick different topics to highlight and company experts to interview. After a week's worth of work, Pullapilly and Gaudet produced 12 online videos.

Increasingly, businesses are jumping on the click-and-play online-video bandwagon. According to CNNMoney.com, Kelsey Group, an advertising research firm, reported that in 2007, small businesses spent \$10.9 million on Internet video ads and are predicted to spend \$1.5 billion in 2012. The trend also focuses on portraying a company's corporate message in a more sincere format, much like the user-submitted videos on YouTube.

According to Dave Jackel, a freelance filmmaker for TurnHere, an Internet video production and advertising company, choosing a documentary-style commercial has a number of benefits. "It's become an aesthetic," he says. "It's also compelling because it's real, it's informative and you can get a high production value without paying absurd prices."

As far as Pullapilly is concerned, such commercials are also great for the independent film community, as many companies are seeking documentary filmmakers to produce the documericals, not just standard production companies. [(....)]