

## Mad Men Design

OZ · Wednesday, August 1st, 2007



AMC Television's Mad Men provides a glimpse into 1960's Madison Avenue advertising agencies. Along with FX Network's Glenn Close starring vehicle, Damages, it is the best new series of the summer.

The main title design is an instant, motion graphics classic. One that accomplishes a rare feat by providing symbolic insight of what's to come. Created by Imaginary Forces, it also serves as the basis for Mad Men's distinctive branding identity & promotional package. A rarity for television that should be more commonplace.

Production design aficionados, visit [AMCTV.com](http://AMCTV.com) for a photo essay feature on Mad Men's set design.

### Press Release

New York, NY (July 25 2007) - The new AMC series Mad Men, set in the world of Madison Avenue ad agencies in the 1960s, greeted viewers on its premiere last Thursday night with a lyrical opening title sequence created and produced by Imaginary Forces, the production company and design studio based here and in Hollywood.

The much-touted series, the first from Matthew Weiner, an executive producer and writer on The Sopranos, premieres on July 19. In addition to designing and producing the show's opening title sequence, Imaginary Forces (IF) was also tapped by AMC to produce the entire on-air promo package for the series, using the imagery it developed for the opening.

The title sequence and promo package was the work of Imaginary Forces directors Mark Gardner and Steve Fuller. It was executive produced for the studio by Maribeth Phillips and produced by Cara McKenney.

Mad Men, which has been aggressively promoted to the media industry via trade advertising in key marketing and media publications, is set in a fictional 1960's ad agency, Sterling Cooper, and centers around the dichotomy of its main characters, all of whom play key roles at the agency. The men balance a work life characterized by the freewheeling social mores of the times, while at home they play the roles of dedicated husbands and fathers.

The entire opening title sequence is executed in a 2-D style that suggests cut-out animation. A man wearing a traditional business suit and carrying a briefcase enters an office and sets the briefcase down. The man-whom we

assume is the show's lead character, "Don Draper," played by actor Jon Hamm-is seen largely in silhouette, but with key accents visible-such as his white shirt and black tie.

Suddenly, the office falls away-pictures drop off the walls, the windows and blinds fall off into space, the floor drops, and our character is suddenly in free fall, hurtling downwards in a slow-mo, dreamlike tumble.

The cityscape through which the silhouetted character falls is a mix of abstract and photo-realistic depictions of a stylized metropolis, filled with high rises all gleaming in an otherworldly environment. As the character falls through the air he's dwarfed against the giant ad images that these buildings bear, a mix of sexy and familiar, with images of leggy models juxtaposed with smiling, wholesome families, representing the conflicting worlds in which he lives.

At the close of the sequence he's seen from behind, sitting in a lounge chair and striking an insouciant pose, arm extended casually, unlit cigarette between his fingers as the program title slowly crawls up the screen. All the titles appear in two-tone, with the first names in red type, last names in black, rendered in a blocky, sans-serif typeface that suggests the era.

Weiner's brief on the project was simple: a man walks into an office and starts to fall. The fall needed to be done in a dreamlike way, he explains, more fantasy than reality. What attracted him to the IF solution, he says, "was that they fought the tendency to use the fall to create a visual climax."

"We had an emotional feeling that we wanted to present, and I.F. helped us find it in a very subtle way," says Weiner, who won an Emmy for his work on *The Sopranos* and has also written for *Andy Richter Controls the Universe* and *Becker*.

According to IF's Gardner, the challenge the studio faced in this project was to connect a 1960s period TV series with today's audiences. "We approached the opening title sequence like a live action film title project instead of a purely animated piece," he explains.

"The disciplined use of camera angles, combined with sophisticated graphics, achieves an insight into the main character's subconscious and the precarious duality of his 'boy's club' career juxtaposed against his perfect nuclear family," Gardner continues. "It's as if he's created this monster, really. The character of Don Draper is a conflicted, tortured soul.

"The action of falling past endless skyscraper walls creates a claustrophobia and helplessness," adds IF director Steve Fuller, "which is abruptly cut short by his composed, reclining pose."

Weiner described that closing shot as reflecting a tremendous sense of confidence, while also being mysterious. As for the character's free-fall from the office suite, past the skyscrapers bedecked with advertising imagery, Weiner explains, "It captures the story of the show-that of a character who's calm on the outside and in free-fall on the inside."

Both Weiner and series producer Scott Hornbacher were impressed by the

way the IF team managed to incorporate thirty different on-screen credits in the span of the thirty-second show opening. Weiner says he expressly did not want any titles to appear over the program content, as he was striving for a more cinematic feel to the opening title sequence. "A lot of studios might have just thrown type up on the screen, but this solution left everyone feeling that the cinematic feel of the opening was preserved."

Geoffrey Whelan, V.P., Brand Creative Director for AMC, says the closing image of the title sequence has not only become the branding device for the show, but has also been the image used in its print advertising and key art. "It's an iconic image that pays off on every level," Whelan says. "This felt like the best creative choice for us at AMC."

IF's Maribeth Phillips notes that it's unusual for the opening title sequence of a program to lend itself to such an easy translation to an overall promo package for a series as the studio's work for Mad Men did. "It's an integrated multi-platform use of the imagery we created," she says.

Production Company: Imaginary Forces (IF)

IF Directors: Mark Gardner, Steve Fuller

IF Executive Producer: Maribeth Phillips

IF Producer: Cara McKenney

IF Coordinator: Michele Watkins

IF Designers: Jeremy Cox, Joey Salim

IF Animators: Fabian Tejada, Jason Goodman, Jeremy Cox, Jordan Sariego

IF Editor: Caleb Woods

Editorial Company: Encore Hollywood

Music Composer: RJD2 "A Beautiful Mine"

Promo Package Client: AMC

V.P., Brand Creative Director: Geoffrey Whelan

V.P., Production and Packaging: Mary Conlon

Sr. Writer-Producer, On-Air Promos: Casimir Nozkowski

Studio: Lionsgate

Production Company: U.R.O.K. Productions

Director: Alan Taylor

Executive Producer: Matthew Weiner

Producer: Scott Hornbacher

Post Producer: Todd London

Editor: Malcolm Jamieson

Lionsgate Director of Post Production: Bobby Williams

### **About Imaginary Forces**

IMAGINARY FORCES (IF) is a production company based in Hollywood and New York. Its award-winning work spans the diverse industries of feature film production, entertainment marketing and promotion, corporate branding, architecture, advertising and interactive media. IF's recent work includes identity packages for USA Network, Animal Planet and MTV, as well as effective and compelling broadcast advertising for Nike, Toyota, Pontiac, Smirnoff and Lexus. In entertainment and media marketing, IF created campaigns for such films as Transformers, The Chronicles of Narnia, The Stepford Wives, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Signs and both Men in

Black films. The company also designed and produced main title sequences for Number 23, Charlotte's Web, The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio, Ray, The Legend of Zorro, Band of Brothers, Spider-Man, Dr. Seuss's The Cat in the Hat and Seven, and produced the highly successful Blade trilogy. Most recently, the company designed the media installations for the new HBO retail store in Manhattan, and created projections for the "Bubbles in the Wine" exhibit at the Grimaldi Forum in Monaco. For more information on IF, contact Danixa Diaz, Head of Business Development, at 323-957-6868.

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## No responses to "Mad Men Design"

1.) [Chuck Titles at ArTect.net - Design & Architecture in Media](#) says:

December 29th, 2008 at 7:42 pm

[...] Forces, who also conceived and executed the opening sequence for AMC's series Mad Men (see Mad Men Design). The design captures the irreverent humor of the show, melding the Nerd Herd logo with titles [...]

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