

CASE STUDIES

MAINFRAME IDENTIS REBRANDED BBC TWO



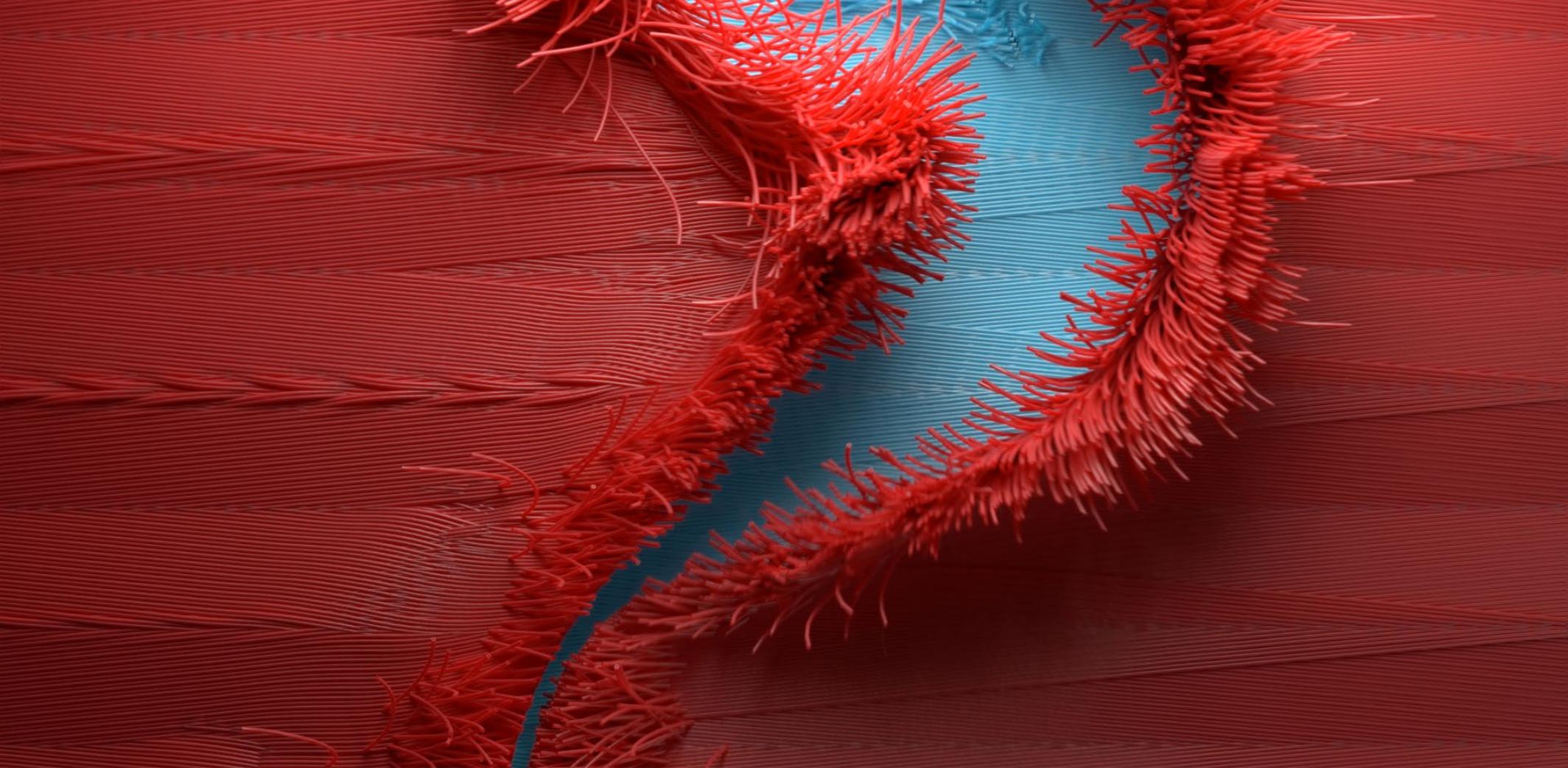


BBC TWO had worked with motion design studio **Mainframe** to refresh its brand identity, for the first time in 25 years. 16 idents created for the channel by British and international animators portrayed a source of inspiration. We take a look at Mainframe; the company that played a key role in the project.

Mainframe is a London and Manchester based creative production studio specialising in innovative motion graphics and 3D. An independent and resourceful studio of more than 20 years, however, Mainframe's heritage in motion graphics has evolved to include concept creation, re-branding, production, direction, creative direction, animation, post-production and visual effects.

Their rich history, working both directly or through the world's top agencies, has allowed them to work with internationally renowned, forward thinking brands to create high quality commercials and branded content. They have produced work for some of the planets' biggest brands, including **Amazon, Dyson, Harrods, Coca-Cola, Disney, Google, Adidas** and **Sony**, just to name a few.

These names certainly contributed to the studio's fame. Yet their work with **BBC Two** is worth the shoutout as a vault of inspiration. For the BBC Two rebrand, **Superunion** brand agency developed an identity that reflects the full range of emotions evoked by BBC Two's content. Mainframe got involved in the team of Superunion and BBC Creative, to design and produce a set of unique idents to help launch BBC Two's first identity update in 25 years.



Founded in 1964, **BBC Two** has always been a path for the boldest and most risk-taking programming. But, without a rebrand in over 20 years, the audience were struggling to say what BBC Two stands for. The challenge was to create a series of channel idents that could express the wide range of programming whilst remaining coherent and true to BBC Two's ethos. The rebranding idents would present itself along with the famous channel for many years to come.

That's why **Mainframe**'s main approach was to emphasise the channel's true identity: alternative viewpoint, pledge to creativity and diverse programming.

SO WHAT DID THEY DO?

Alongside some fantastic collaborators, such as **Aardman, The Mill, David McLeod** and **Future Deluxe, Mainframe** was invited to bring to life three unique idents; offbeat comedy, gripping drama and sharp satire. It was important each would conjure a feeling that was instantly recognisable to the genre they would represent.

Constrained only by the 2-curve shape and specific animation timings, Mainframe was free to explore different creative routes and as a studio they allowed themselves to experiment in any software or technique until they found something that captured the right emotion. Gripping drama uses bound metal-like fabrics that constantly twist without release to create suspense and tension.

“The first challenge was to ensure we fully understood what Superunion & BBC Two were aiming for and how they had gotten to the point they had. As there were several collaborators, there was a stringent set of

‘rules’ created in terms of position of the 2 curve on the screen as well as timing and flow of each animation” said **Lee Walker, Mainframe Creative Director**.

They were supplied with several tools and documents to help with that and they developed a time map template they gave designers in-house to ensure they conformed to these ‘rules’. **Superunion** went to them with a starting point for each of them and they took those thoughts and developed several style frames exploring texture and colour. “We created animatics that played with how animation speed, tension and material property communicated the mood of each ident and brought those together to create idents that stand out. All sound design was developed by *Alex Barnowski* and it really highlighted the mood we had created in animation.”

The walking orange monster was a collection of different research development tests that they were ready to discard until they noticed that together they



created something absolutely surreal and comedic. The cuts through strings represent sharp satire. To create these they used a combination of C4D and Houdini.

Mainframe has firmly and effectively proved their unique identity by being a part of this project that continues to remind itself over the years. The **founder of Mainframe Adam Jenns**, agrees. “Being part of the team that was tasked with creating the idents for such an iconic British brand really was a dream project for us. We knew this work could be around for many years to come so everything had to be exactly right and I’m pleased to say I think our team nailed it. I, for one, will never get bored of pointing at the quirky and original animations on screen and saying ‘we did that!’.

Patrick Holland, Controller of BBC Two thought that the channel branding reflects this constantly eclectic and stimulating mix of programming. Each ident shows a unique visual representation of the number two. In achieving this goal, **BBC executive creative director Laurent Simon** stressed the importance of working with as many collaborators they see relevant as they can. “The BBC offers such a large, public platform for creative expression and exposure. What’s also exciting is that it’s modelled to be iterative, refreshed and expanded by as many collaborators as we see relevant for the audience and channel.”

Mainframe communicated a direct message with this project. A message that promises creative freedom, adding value to the project and authenticity. This resulted in work that was able to remain true to BBC Two’s stimulating content.

A full determination to express the given idea in their own unique interpretation, Mainframe marked themselves as a leader in the field.

Mainframe won [Le Book Special Categories Newsletter Awards 2020](#).

