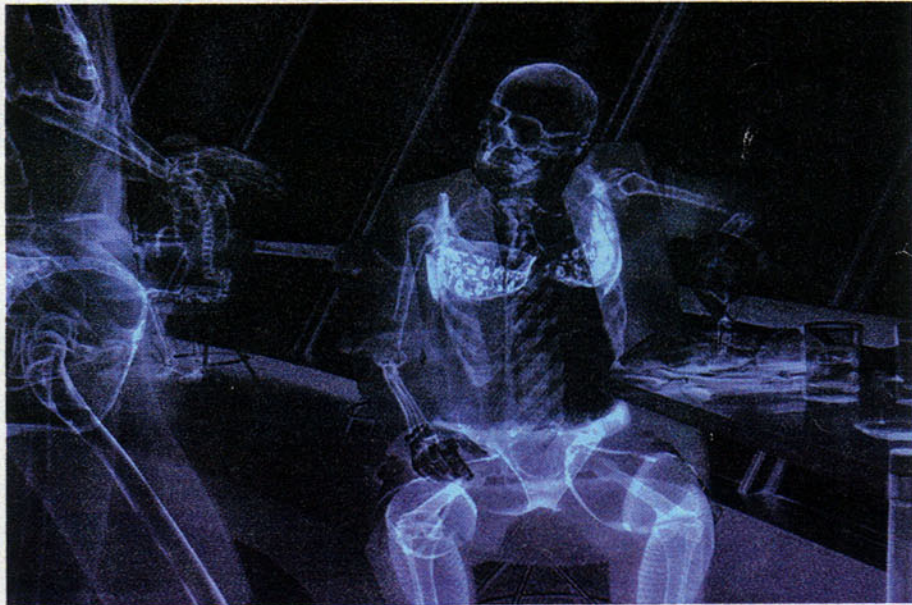
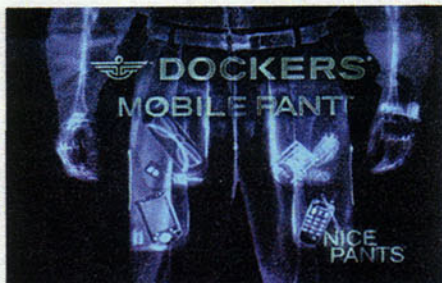
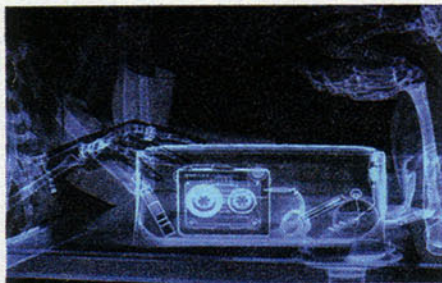


PRODUCTION

HOW 'D THEY DO THAT SPOT?

Rhinoceros creates some bones of East Coast CG contention in a new Dockers spot.

By Terry Kattleman



Rick Wagonheim and Michael Miller, executive producers/partners at New York's Rhinoceros Visual Effects & Design, are on a mission: They're fighting a battle against the long-held perception that all the cool CG is done on the West Coast. Now they have a weapon to work with in the form of an X-ray intensive :30 for the new Dockers Mobile Pant line and FCB/San Francisco. Directed by Jim Sonzero of HSI Productions, the spot, titled "X-ray Vision," features a woman playing around with X-ray specs in a restaurant. But they're not your typical X-ray specs. She can see through clothes with them, but they reveal everything beneath the surfaces of objects — at least everything that can be shown on TV — not just bones. The point being, this new line of Dockers has extra "invisible," bulge-proof zipper pockets for cell phones, PDAs and the like for the digital guy on the go. "You literally cannot see what this guy is carrying," says Miller. "Unless, of course, you have X-ray vision."

Which brings us to Rhinoceros CG director/digital artist

Arman Matin, who must've been a radiologist in a previous life. Since the clothing can't disappear in this X-ray, "we knew we needed to integrate CG with existing live-action footage," explains Matin. "It's the layering of tons of different elements that makes this X-ray style unique. You see the clothing, under the clothing, the objects under the clothing, as well as the skeleton." The shoot itself was a one-day affair, but the animation took six weeks. The painstaking detail started on set, where the actors were photographed against a measured grid so the Rhino artists could build an appropriate skeleton for each of them. All small objects on the set — chairs, silverware, briefcases, everything — got the same treatment, with all of it later modeled in Maya to replace the live-action objects. "Some shots required moving cameras, for which we placed markers and used Maya to track the camera information," says Matin. "For some shots, we even had to film subjects against greenscreen and composite them into the plate later." The blackplates were cleaned up in Inferno, eliminating markers and unwanted objects, then everything had to be positioned in CGI to match the live action and composited in Adobe AfterEffects. "Every time an actor moved, we had to

animate their skeletons to move right along with them," adds Matin. "It was literally a frame-by-frame process." After animators added layers of clothing to the skeletons, an X-ray shader, developed in Maya, was employed to render it all in X-ray tonalities. After the final images were color corrected, the transition from live to X-ray effect took place in Inferno.

"It's the orchestration of the balance of CG and live action that makes it work, says Miller. "Each shot is anywhere from 30 to 60 layers thick with CG and live action."

"We had to carefully control the transparency of each layer and decide how much to fade out so the viewer will know what's going on," continues Matin. "Otherwise you'd be totally confused by the amount of information you're seeing."

Does this technique have a pet name? "On the floor at Rhinoceros, it's referred to as Armandovision," laughs Miller. ■

Scenes from Dockers' "X-ray Vision" feature comic asides like a man wearing women's underwear and a woman secretly taping a conversation. The payoff, of course, is the Dockers man in all his deep-pocketed glory