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DAVID FINCHER AND DIGITAL DOMAIN COLLABORATE ON  
NINE INCH NAILS VIDEO

All-CG Music Video Couples the Creativity of Fincher and the Superb Execution of  
Digital Domain

**New York, NY** – The idea had been swimming in the back of David Fincher’s mind for a number of years. On many occasions the Anonymous Content director discussed it with his longtime collaborators at digital production studio Digital Domain, Venice, Calif.

“David and I talked about a scene that takes place entirely in the confines of an executive’s workspace,” explained Ed Ulbrich, Digital Domain’s senior VP, general manager. “He envisioned the objects in the office coming to life under the right circumstances. The difficulty was finding the right project.”

When the opportunity to direct the latest Nine Inch Nails video arose, Fincher recognized the possibilities: The band’s new single “Only” drives to a crushing crescendo, which was ideal for the timing of the visuals. And from a technical standpoint, both Fincher and Ulbrich knew that bleeding edge special effects software and hardware could now deliver Fincher’s project just as he imagined it.

“The visuals we created for ‘One’ represent some of the best photoreal imagery to come out of this studio,” said Ulbrich. “Even though we’d been discussing this project for years, it could not have been done quite how we wanted until now. We tested some next-generation technologies on this project. This means new rendering technologies and new advances in CG were all used for this video.”

The spot opens with an overhead shot of a pristine workspace. A man’s hands move into the scene to tap the keyboard and start the song playing through the computer’s

speakers (these brief shots represent the only live action photography in the entire video). The camera surveys the office accessories—a computer, a desk lamp, a white porcelain cup filled with coffee, and two executive desk toys that play central roles in the video. The first, known as a “Newton’s Cradle,” is a well-known executive toy consisting of five silver balls suspended from a frame by strings that knock into each other rhythmically. The second, sometimes called a “pin block,” is a collection of unsharpened pins secured in a frame. Pressing a hand against the pins creates an impression and holds the shape.

Objects on the desk begin to react to the Nine Inch Nails song playing through the computer’s speakers. First, we see ripples in the coffee. Then, small vibrations pass through the silver balls of the Newton’s Cradle. When lead singer Trent Reznor’s vocals kick in, his face appears in the pin art. The pins, gradually growing more frenzied with the music, show an impression of Reznor as he sings and moves with the track. The camera takes impossible pathways around the scene – passing through the computer screen to circle the pin art, and flying through the speaker grating for a close up of the speaker’s tweeters.

Digital Domain worked with Fincher to build the virtual space, create realistic lighting, and model and animate the objects. Eric Barba, Digital Domain’s visual effects supervisor explained how he and his team built the space in a virtual world. “We first used ‘pan and tile’ technology to establish the scene,” he said. “This is a robot camera used to take pictures in every direction. Later, we assemble those pictures in the computer to create a 3D space.”

Afterwards, Barba explained, a digital still camera was used to photograph the scene’s objects – the lamp, the computer, etc. – as references for modeling, skinning and texturing CG versions. The last major step before animation was to create perfect computer-generated lighting. This process, according to Barba, is remarkably similar to real world lighting. “After establishing the placement and intensity of the lights in the room, we would line up a shot,” Barba explained. “If it needed softer light, we set up a

virtual bounce card just the same way it happens on a set. Just as it would happen in real life, we make adjustments as we go.”

Finally, Reznor was captured on video as a reference for animators creating his image in the pin block. Throughout the video, Reznor moves toward and away from the camera and sometimes slams his hand against the screen– all excellent fodder for compelling animation using the pins.

“Everyone was pleased with the final product,” explained Ulbrich. “‘One’ turned out to be the ideal convergence of the right idea, the right project and the right technology.”

#### **ABOUT DIGITAL DOMAIN**

Founded in 1993, Digital Domain, Inc. has established a world-class reputation for innovation and artistry. Recipient of four Academy Awards, the studio has produced visual effects over the last ten years for films that have generated over \$4 billion in worldwide theatrical box-office sales.

In the world of commercials, Digital Domain is one of the industry’s largest and most honored creators of visual effects, including the cutting edge advertising campaigns for Adidas and Nike directed by David Fincher. The division consistently works with a stellar group of A-list directors including Michael Bay, Joe Pytka, Bruce Dowad, David Kellogg and Alex Proyas. Industry awards for the commercials division include numerous Clio awards, AICP awards, Cannes Lion awards as well as numerous other industry honors.

Digital Domain is currently one of the largest digital studios in the world and hosts an integrated production studio that includes divisions for Feature Film Visual Effects, Commercial Production, Music Videos, Location Based Entertainment and Feature Film Development.

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