



Videos: Goldie Lookin' Chain • Wagon Christ • Black Eyed Peas • The Streets • The Charlatans

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PROMO



PRODUCTION: Soft Citizen; director: Monkms; producer: Douangta Inthavixay; lead animators: Paul Dutton & Justin Lee (Toronto); animation & compositing: Fluorescent Hill (Montreal); background painting: Ruby Zagorskis; editor: Byron Leckie; scanning/assistant producer: Pete Feeney. COMMISSIONER: Phil Lee at XL.

BADLY DRAWN BOY YEAR OF THE RAT

With all the pain and suffering going on in the world, we need new heroes. Well, in Monkms's video for Year Of The Rat it becomes evident that all we need is Damon Gough (aka Badly Drawn Boy) to turn our troubled planet into a truly wonderful place.

He leaves his apartment with his faithful (rather Damon-like) dog, and encounters a woman who literally burns with rage against him. His reaction is initially startling: he hugs her, and keeps on hugging until eventually the rage goes from her. From then on, as he encounters hate and pain, his unbreakable hug heals people: first at a car accident, then in a parliament, then he heals the superpower divide, and once he has sorted humankind's problems, he hugs smashed-up cars, power stations and trees, to create a clean, blossoming world. Finally, at

the end of the day back at home, he even gives his dog a hug.

The fact that this is affecting rather than completely daft is down to Monkms (the tag of Toronto-based animator Kenneth Wong) whose style, previously seen in videos for Ninja Tune's Kid Koala, is well suited to the creation of an unprepossessing yet distinctly huggable cartoon Damon. He says he developed the story and Damon character from the overall feel of the track rather than its specific lyrics – even though the chorus contains the line: "You got to hold on..."

"The overall tone of the music was very life-affirming and positive," says Wong. "So the character in the video became a very easy-going, understanding and patient person. The idea is he would always outlast everyone else." In the circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that Damon and his label were quite happy to give Monkms

PROMO OF THE MONTH

almost complete free rein once they had approved his script; the only issue was the character design on Damon himself. "We went back and forth a couple of times on that," says the director. "Quite honestly I would have liked him to have a cigarette hanging out of his mouth in the entire video, and having a couple of drinks, but the label said they preferred to get the promo played."

Monkms created almost all the artwork himself, and most of the backgrounds – "in the circumstances there was no time to train someone to draw in that style," he says – but he also took a far more traditional route than he has done with previous videos: most of it was completely hand-drawn.

"My last Kid Koala video was entirely made from cut-ups created in the computer – it was an entirely digital job. We wanted something more analogue here, but drawn animation is much harder. This was about doing 24 drawings a second in the traditional way. On average you would usually get 45 seconds a month by this method, but we had six weeks to create a four-minute promo." In fact, Wong had help from animators all over Toronto and Montreal.

"I think next time I'd keep it all digital," he says. But the end result not only is very effective in restoring the aura surrounding Badly Drawn Boy, an aura he partly lost with the follow-up to his much-loved debut album, of the ordinary bloke capable of something very special. It also sends a truly resonant message with real charm. This hits exactly the right note.

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