

THE HIVE

# Bees make honey

The latest of VTR's subsidiaries is a graphics house that doesn't like to restrict itself to any one industry. Rob Buckley puts his head into The Hive to see what the firm's working on

Jack of all trades, master of none? That's the kind of accusation David Southwood would like to avoid for his new project, graphics and new media house The Hive. Ten years at VTR, Southwood's plan for his company is for it to be the best at everything.

"A lot of places are film graphics only, or commercials only, or games only," he maintains. "We go across all of them. We want to take the nice bits - I've come from a quality post-house and I want to do the top work."

The company formed when the VTR group decided to merge VTR's 3D department with sister company AMG Effects. "There's Blue, The Machine Room, VTR and so on and it made sense to spin us off as a separate entity, too. So they gave me a budget and told me to make money, which is what I'm doing, basically."

There's little sign of The Hive asserting its own identity yet: the only clue to its existence in the facility it shares with The Film Factory are a few flyers at reception.

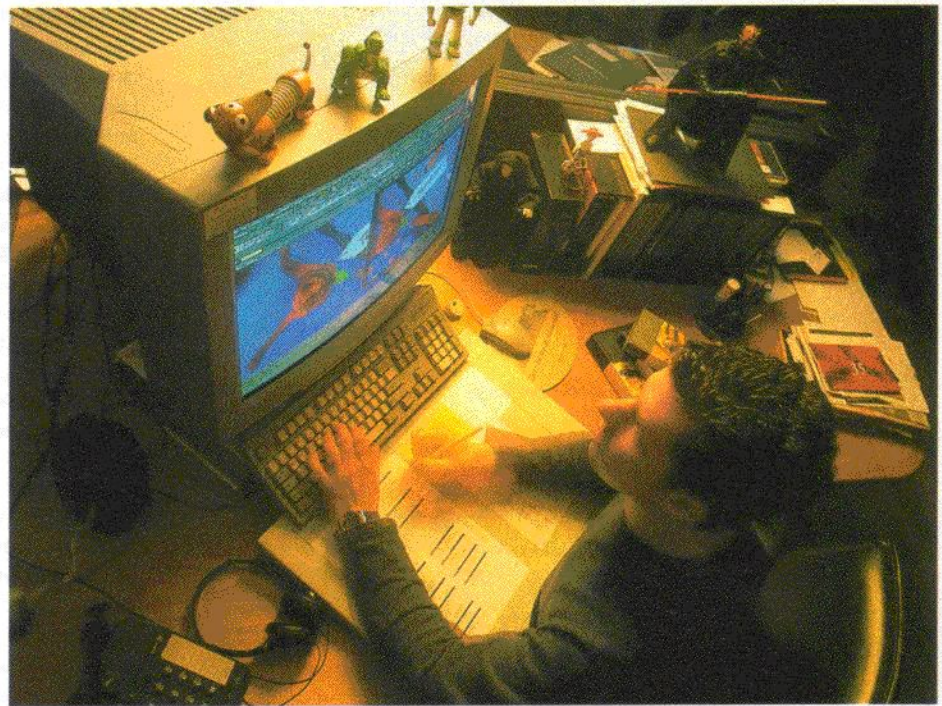
Still, at 15 animators, The Hive is a respectably-sized



Frogs for a Swiss bank add to the countryside motifs and the animals of The Hive

company, but Southwood wants to maintain a boutique-style atmosphere. "There are a lot of people, but I want the animators to interact with clients. Clients are on first-name terms with us - I want it to stay that friendly."

The company already has a good client list, including The Cartoon Network and Ginger TV, which took some animations the firm had done on spec and put them on *TFI Friday*. MGM is getting menus done there for its forthcoming *Some Like It Hot* DVD and the company is working on games,



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stings, idents and a few commercials as well.

So how does Southwood convince prospective clients they don't want to go to the games, broadcast graphics or film specialist down the road, but want to get into bed with The Hive?

"When people come in here and see the stuff we can't put on our showreel, they love the range of things we can do, from real-looking to cartoon," he believes. "I didn't know you could do that,' is a pretty common reaction."

The one-stop shop opportu-

nity also exists within the group, but Southwood is still waiting for that first call to start the rush. He can still use the other companies' facilities when he needs to, though.

Can the one-facility-suits-all approach work? Southwood thinks so. "I've been in the industry ten years, watching it go up and down, up and down. I've seen film companies go to the wall because they concentrate only on films. If there's one thing I've learnt, it's don't put all your eggs in one basket. Just keep a steady balance."

KIT SPEC

There are 15 animators at The Hive, working on NT, SGI and Mac platforms.

The company has seven Maya seats (two on NT), nine Lightwave seats and two Softimage 3D seats - upgrades to XSI are "coming soon."

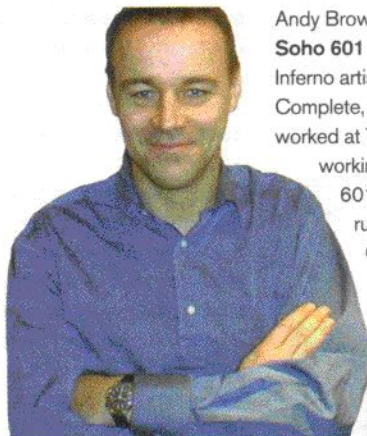
The Hive is also working on a Linux-based system and has just finished setting up NT- and SGI-based render farms. For other needs, it uses the equipment at other VTR firms.

IN BRIEF



**Baraka** has completed work on a series of interstitials for Discovery's forthcoming hosted nights of themed

programming. Created by Discovery Channel producer Adam Gill and in-house designer Aleksandar Stiljic in Jaleo, they centre on the various themes: gangsters, liners, villains and ancient inventions.



Andy Brown has joined **Soho 601** as a senior Inferno artist. Previously at Complete, Brown has also worked at The Mill. He'll be working on Soho 601's new Inferno, running on an Onyx 2.

Meanwhile, senior post-producer **Matt Adams** has joined the company board.



**Laughing Buddha** is finishing work on *Shaker Maker*, a Princess Productions lifestyle show for the BBC about cocktail maker Ben Reed, made in the style of

*Naked Chef*. It was edited in an Avid MC1000 by Justin Annandale. The company is expecting an Editbox FX this month, which will be the territory of new arrival Mitch Baker.