

THE MEDIA AGENCY

Guerrilla Post

When you're tired of Soho, you're tired of life (or top-end prices, or parking problems, or pollution...) Two film-makers show Robert Buckley round their home-spun alternative in leafy W5

What does editing mean to you? "Going to the West End, paying stupid money to sit on a plush sofa and have pretty assistants ask you if you want a curry?" That was the experience of two film directors who ended up creating their own alternative, The Media Agency, now reaching its first birthday.

Chris Jones (co-author of *The Guerrilla Film Maker's Handbook*) and Simon Cox (former *Film Fair* editor) met through the New Producers Alliance and found they shared a need for cheap post-production. They bought an Avid, which they soon found themselves renting out, so they bought another. Before long, they had their own company.

Based at Ealing Studios, The Media Agency has one key philosophy: "use last year's technology today." First impressions of its offices are often "my God, it's held together with string and Sellotape," according to Jones. But hidden in the four small rooms are a Cynergy online, Avid Film and Media Composers and 3D Studio. Even admin PCs are overnight renderers.

"We've found clients con-

sistently want the dog's bollocks, but by that they don't mean today's cutting-edge, but yesterday's," Jones says. If you spent £1m on brand new kit, he points out, you'd have to pass on the cost to clients. After three years, he says, it'll be doing the same thing - but at a third the cost.

So the facility's appeal is to makers of "cheaper telly," notably Channel 5 and Sky1. "People have the idea that if they have low budgets, they'll get crap. We say 'OK, you've got a low budget so we'll use low-cost tools.' Directors and editors often bamboozle producers: we hear directors saying 'oh no, we have to do this,' and sit there thinking, 'he's lying through his teeth. He just wants a bigger toy to play with.' We forge better alliances with producers than with directors."

Despite a London postcode, the facility has a regional feel. "You see trees; there's a canteen; there's parking, so clients don't have to get the tube to central London." And their Ealing base means the pair meet as many directors and producers as in Soho.



MARK TYNAN



Films and a book under their belts, and an Avid in the kitchen



For three months a year, the facilities are turned over to Cox's and Jones' films (like *Urban Ghost Story*, with Jason Connery, or *White Angel*, with Peter Firth). Film-making is still their love, and they use this to advantage: "In shows where there have been gaps, we've actually grabbed a Hi8 camera, run out the back for some shots and dropped them in. The client's come back and

said "Where are those from? I don't remember them..."

Though they plan to get more Avids and some satellite on-lines, Cox and Jones want to keep the company small. Cox sums up the facility's ethos: "If you want cordon bleu food, go to a cordon bleu restaurant. We're the fish and chip shop up the road. We offer good-quality chips, though, and probably vegan fat." ■

KIT SPEC

Editing: Avid Media
Composer offline with 18Gb storage; Avid Film
Composer offline with
Protools digital audio
with 36Gb storage;
Cynergy Edit online.

3D and effects: Cynergy
Paint, Cynergy Effect;
3D Studio, Photoshop.

Audio: Studio Audio
workstation with 28
hours' storage; CD sound
effects libraries.

Formats: BetaSP, U-Matic,
Hi8, Mini-DV, VHS, DAT,
DigiBeta on request.