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Student film takes center stage thanks to PR buzz

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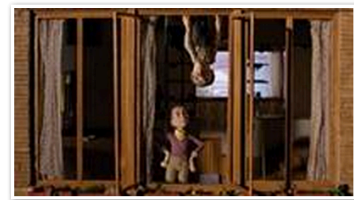
Client: National Film and Television School (Beaconsfield, UK)

Agency: The Burgett Group (Santa Monica, CA)

Campaign: Campaign for Oscar-nominated "Head Over Heels"

Duration: February 11 - 24, 2013

Budget: about \$15,000 (including ads)



Created by students at the [National Film and Television School](#) (NFTS),

"Head Over Heels" was the only student film nominated for an Academy

Award this year. It faced stiff competition in the best animated short

category, with films from both Walt Disney Animation Studios and Fox also nominated. NFTS hired The Burgett

Group to help raise the film's profile before voting closed on February 19.

"This was our third student film nominated for an Oscar in the last seven years," explains NFTS director Nik Powell. "The campaign served two purposes - to get us enough attention to have a chance of winning and to raise the profile of the film, the filmmakers, and the school. I'd worked with a major US PR company on promoting the other two films. It was nice, but they couldn't really focus on us because they were working on big feature film nominations. This time I wanted to hire someone in the US who I thought could make a small resource go a long way, in addition to Coveney Communications' Petra Coveney, who was handling the campaign excellently on this side of the pond."

Strategy

Social media outreach and media relations drove buzz. NFTS also ran ads in select outlets.

"This was the first year animated shorts were allowed to go online," says agency founder Heather Burgett. "As soon as we learned that Disney had posted its film online, we advised NFTS to follow suit."

Tactics

Burgett targeted entertainment trade media and mainstream outlets. Pitches highlighted that the film was the only student film nominated and leveraged the student-versus-big-studio angle.

A full-page ad was placed in *Variety*, which also got a February 7 exclusive on the launch of the film's director Timothy Reckart's production company.

A pitch pegged to the news about animated shorts going online resulted in a February 15 story in *The Hollywood Reporter* that started what Burgett calls "a viral cascade."

Outlets in Reckart's hometown of Tucson, AZ, and in producer Fodhla Cronin O'Reilly's native Ireland were also pitched.

The film was posted to the [school's YouTube channel](#) February 14 to 18.

Posts on the [film's Facebook page](#) highlighted the filmmakers and media coverage.

Coveney Communications ran promotion in the UK. Shorts International, which distributed the films to theaters, also promoted the contenders.

Results

Though Disney's "Paperman" won the Oscar, Powell is "extremely pleased" with the campaign.

"We created some real heat from a tiny resource," he says. "We never got coverage anywhere near this out of our previous two Oscar campaigns."

Between February 14 and 18, the film garnered more than 300,000 YouTube views, and its Facebook page likes jumped from 200 to more than 3,000.

Burgett conservatively estimates more than 125 stories ran in the US and the UK combined.

Future

Powell says NFTS is planning its PR approach for this year's awards season.