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Animation company's goals: Series, live-action production

John Seelmeyer, 2/21/2011

A Reno animation company is looking to raise capital to take its business up a couple of notches, money that will allow it take on a feature film and a television series.

Antipode Entertainment Inc., owned by the husband-and-wife team of Dayan and AnnaSheila Paul, has been focused for eight years on meat-and-potatoes animation projects.

The firm and its contractors have developed animation for gaming-equipment manufacturers. They've developed programming for digital signs and pre-show advertising in movie theaters. And Dayan Paul even created an animated e-card distributed by HDgreetings.

But the company's owners set their sights higher. They're looking to raise about \$360,000 to move forward with "Da Vinci Jr.," an animated television program to teach drawing and other creative skills to children.

And they've founded Hog Wild Pictures LLC, which is raising money to produce a horror-comedy movie, "Hog Wild," based on a script written by Dayan Paul.

The company looks to raise \$4 million by selling a 75 percent interest in the project. Antipode would develop animation and special effects for "Hog Wild."

In the meantime, Antipode is racking up awards for a three-minute animated short, "Courageous Crustaceans," that Dayan Paul envisions as the starting point for a 90-minute animated feature.

In recent months, "Courageous Crustaceans" has won recognition at events including the California Film Awards, the Cinema Festival of Hollywood and the Anchorage Film Festival.

Dayan and AnnaSheila Paul both completed master's degree programs in computer animation and illustration at New York City's School of Visual Arts. They landed in Reno as developers of animation for gaming machines developed by companies including International Game Technology, Bally Technologies and Silicon Gaming, then struck off on their own with Antipode in 2003.

Even though Reno is far from the film industry of Southern California that the Pauls hope to crack, northern Nevada provides a low-cost operating environment for the company. That's been particularly important, Dayan Paul says, because Antipode doesn't have deep pockets.

"We've done pretty much everything with our own capital," he says.

Besides, he says much of the company's work with clients stretching from Reno to Shanghai is handled through digital communications, and it doesn't matter much where Antipode is headquartered.

Much of the company's production work is handled by a cadre of contractors who live across the country.

Dayan Paul says a bigger challenge for the company has been narrowing its focus in a segment that provides opportunities that range from games for the Facebook platform to applications for mobile devices to live-action and animated films.

At the moment, Antipode is nibbling in all those markets even as it continues to work with traditional clients such as a digital sign companies.

Another recent focus, Dayan Paul says, has been learning how to package the company and its projects in a way that draws the interest of investors.

Antipode has made a couple of recent presentations to investor groups to C4CUBE, a business incubator in downtown Reno.

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