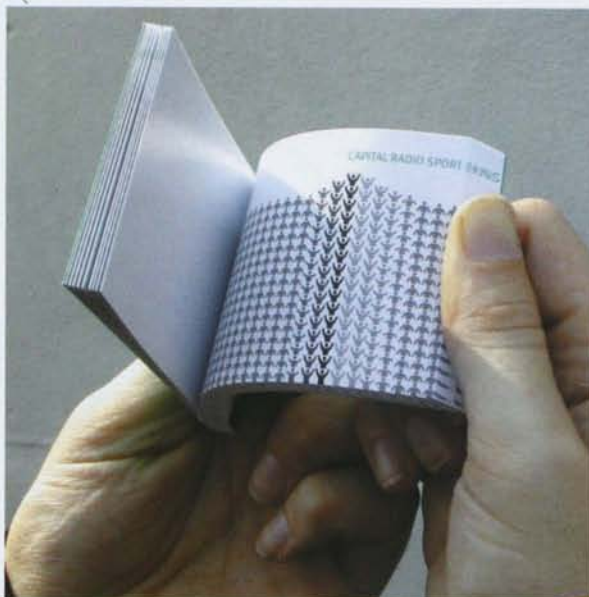
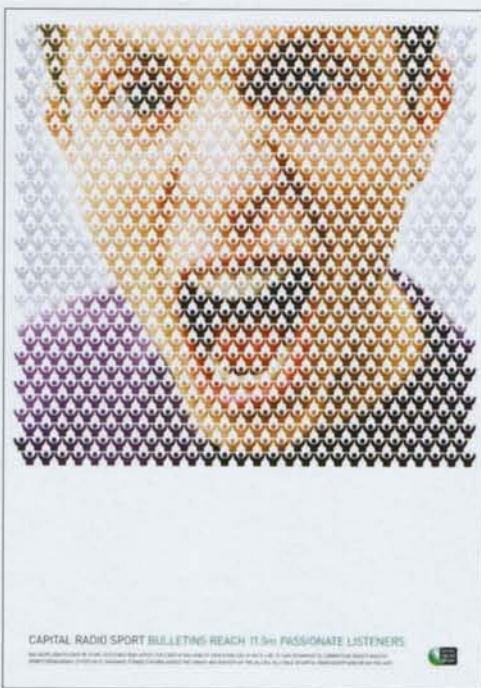




PROFILE **HAT-TRICK
DESIGN**

"I think the fact that we still all sit around the table, banging our heads together to get results, is one of our strengths." Jim Sutherland discusses how Hat-Trick does things by threes rather than halves



1. An association with photography group, In-Public, led to the creation of the book *Threee*, available from www.in-public.com. "They're almost religious in the way they shoot street photography, refusing to cheat by using any props," says Hat-Trick's Jim Sutherland. "Obviously there are three of us, and here all the images are based around threes, so we also used it as a promotional tool, sending it to all our clients."

2. In 2001, Hat-Trick put together a new campaign for Capital Radio, aiming to raise awareness within the media industry of the radio station's sports coverage. "The final image [left] has a photo of a fan, which was screened using lots of little fans." To the right of this is the Capital Radio flipbook mailer featuring the small fan graphics, which was sent out to media agencies.



Engaging the reader is key to what we do," says Jim Sutherland, co-founder of Hat-Trick Design. "The idea is to create designs that are more than decorative, with some communication value in there."

A simple enough philosophy, but applying it to a diverse range of client projects is easier said than done. For Jim and fellow director/co-founders Gareth Howat and David Kimpton, the ability to infuse projects with creative energy while also delivering the right message is a talent honed through years of industry experience. This has helped the studio build up a client roster featuring the likes of Capital Radio, D&AD, Graham And Brown and Abbey National, in under two years.

After graduating from their graphic design courses (Jim at Norwich School Of Art, Gareth at Kingston, and David at Somerset College of Arts and Technology) all three landed positions at brand design consultants, The Partners. "After we all moved on we kept in touch, having numerous pub conversations about setting up in business together," recalls Jim. "We were all at creative director level, and finally decided that we wanted to do it for ourselves. We started up Hat-Trick in the beginning of 2001."

WORD OF MOUTH

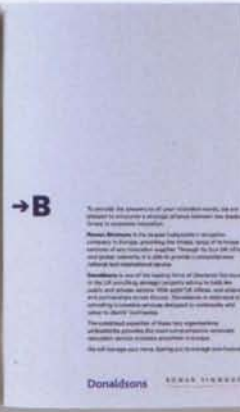
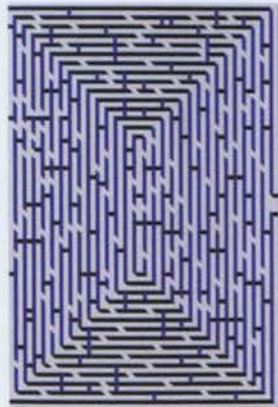
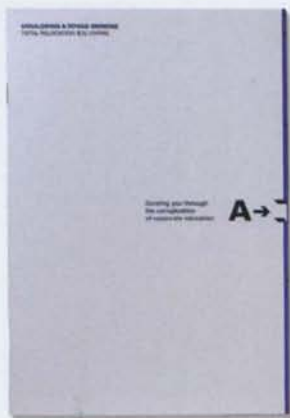
Starting afresh meant finding new clients, but personal contacts at Capital Radio and mechanical and engineering

company, Maleon, quickly led to the first two contracts. From there the client base has mushroomed.

"The Capital project led to more radio work, including an identity job for Independent Radio News, and a couple of projects we did for D&AD, the leading design body, led them to recommend us for other jobs, too. All our work has come from referrals. It does tend to give you an advantage. We've tended to find that cold calling never gets you anywhere."

The studio handles what Jim describes as "everything that involves thinking in the design sense". This includes identity work, Website projects, direct mailing and other printed materials. "The only thing we

3. Independent Radio News supplies news to independent radio stations around the UK. "The previous identity was 25 years old, so it was a real upheaval for them to contemplate a new one," says Jim. The simple but highly effective design used is based on the IRN lettering, created by tweaking an existing typeface.



1 "E-Creations asked us to launch a site aimed at designers," explains Jim. "They wanted to advertise their services, which provide Website back ends for people like us who design the front end. The viewer can scroll along the whole thing, and click on an object for more information. There's a mobile phone to show the messaging, for example, and there's an angle poise lamp that can be dragged around and switched on or off." View www.yourdigitalpartners.com.

2 Hat-Trick designed a launch brochure for Donaldson & Rowan Simmons, a new service offered by a chartered surveyor and a relocation company. "They gave us a process chart, showing the obstacles between the start and the end of the process," says Jim. "We came up with the maze analogy to show that while the process is complex, the company can guide customers through it smoothly."

don't really do is packaging. We've all previously done the odd packaging job, but it's something we've never really been too involved with. And once you get used to doing certain projects then you tend to do more in that vein."

Purposefully keeping the studio small, the three directors are aided by just two in-house designers, preferring to buy any extra talent as it's needed for a project.

SEATED AT A MAC ALL DAY, IT'S JUST TOO EASY TO KNOCK SOMETHING UP THAT LOOKS REASONABLE

"We'll design the front end and the look and feel of Website, then get the programming done out of house," says Jim. Photographic retouching and copywriting duties are also farmed out. This means that the studio can remain lean while competing with the larger studios for more ambitious jobs. "The client gets the same number of people working on their project as they would at a large agency."

The trio has found a happy middle ground between leadership and teamwork, each member taking charge of a number of jobs, dealing with the brief and steering the design with ongoing help from the other two. "I think the fact that we still all sit around the table, banging our heads together

to get results is one of our strengths," asserts Jim.

And of course the clients benefit, not only from being able to deal directly with a hands-on partner rather than someone further down the company ladder, but also in the way that all three know exactly what's going on with any particular job. There's also the knowledge that any decisions are backed up by years of experience.

"That's definitely true. We've been meeting clients and taking briefs for a very long time. We may be a young company, but it's very different from a company set up by people fresh out of college."

THINKING TIME

Jim doesn't believe that Hat-Trick's output is aided by any identifiable software tricks or techniques, and as far as he's concerned, most of their influences either come from outside of the industry, or stem from their years working at The Partners.

Each job is treated differently, and the studio's work is clearly more about elegant design than showy *Photoshop* tricks. The system set-up at Hat-Trick is a familiar one – but it wasn't always that way. These days, it comprises five G4 Macs, a PowerBook and the usual

assortment of printers and scanners. Likewise, the software is typical, with much of the work relying on *XPress*, *Photoshop* and *Illustrator*, plus *Flash* and *Dreamweaver* for Web visuals.

"When we all started, there weren't any Macs. I think in some ways that gave us a good grounding. It makes us think about design a little more, only sitting in front of the screen once we've decided what we want to communicate.

"Although we're now very hands-on with the computers, we still like to spend almost as much time brainstorming away from the screen," he stresses.

"Computers do save us an inordinate amount of time, but you have to have some thoughts before using the software," continues Jim. "It is good to experiment and muck about, coming up with things that are actually nicer than what you were originally trying to achieve with the software, but you still need to think about the bigger picture. Seated at the Mac all day, it's just too easy to run through *Photoshop* filters and knock something up that looks reasonable but hasn't been thought through. Anyone can go in there pushing buttons, but you need a reason for doing it." □