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# Cutting Edge gets sharper

Cutting Edge's new Brisbane headquarters is certainly the best visual media post production facility in the Southern Hemisphere. It's another sharp edge for a company whose client service focus is winning business from all over the world.

**C**utting Edge's new West End facility is *sharp*. It looks sharp and so do the staff.

How can clients not rush back to a company whose 'star service' staff greet them at the front door, lead them to their ready-to-go post production suites (where their favourite refreshments await them, prepared just the way they like, thanks to information gleaned from the Cutting Edge client service database) and find their needs accommodated in a manner befitting movie stars. It's an ethos that carries through to the pleasant, interested and creative manner of staff throughout the operation.

"It illustrates where our priorities lay - our customers are the stars of our business and that's the way we like to treat them," said managing director Ray Smith.

Inside the world-class building, it's an intoxicating mix of Hollywood studio, NASA control centre, five-star restaurant and something akin to a modern hospital surgical ward.

"When you design a state-of-the-art building like this, you draw from designs that need the same kinds of performance that you demand - and that's really a mix of hi-tech environ-

ment combined with a five-star hotel," said Cutting Edge marketing manager, Justine Douglas.

The building, on the site of the former McWilliams Wines headquarters on the Brisbane River, was designed by Brisbane architect Richard Kirk.

The Cutting Edge HQ was four years in the making and the benefits show in the detail. The building is wireless and has ready ducting for cables and fibre optics, concealed in darkened ceiling alcoves that are reminiscent of a television studio. All entry points are controlled by individual swipe card access for enhanced security.

Batteries and generator systems protect the sensitive technology from power outages and surges. There is a fire-proof secure area for the company's vast array of computer servers - in which fire would be staved off by non-combustible gas instead of water, to save damaging the hardware - and special suspended floors and hard mounts for sound recording and visual media transfer equipment. For example, the company's Sony Vialta High Definition Telecine machine is mounted on hydraulic cushions that come out of the medical scanning industry.

Cutting Edge CEO, John Lee said the new headquarters set out to be world class in every respect. It was the result of years of research, seeing what existed in the US, Europe and Asia, and adding elements that would see Cutting Edge maintain its lead into the future.

"But the new place gives us an edge because it gives our clients an edge," he said. "Right here in Brisbane, we can offer a facility that is the equal of any in the world, combined with the unique creativity and skills of our people - and with a pricing advantage over post production houses in the US, or even Sydney."

## BREAKING NEW GROUND

Breaking ground at the new West End headquarters goes hand-in-hand with the way Cutting Edge continues to break new ground in post production.

The recent Granada TV reality series *I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here* - edited and aired on a daily basis in the UK and Germany - has won Cutting Edge new international admiration. To cope with the demands of the series, Cutting Edge not only set up 24-hour editing suites in the rainforests of the Gold Coast Hinterland, it redeveloped its unique content management system for Granada.

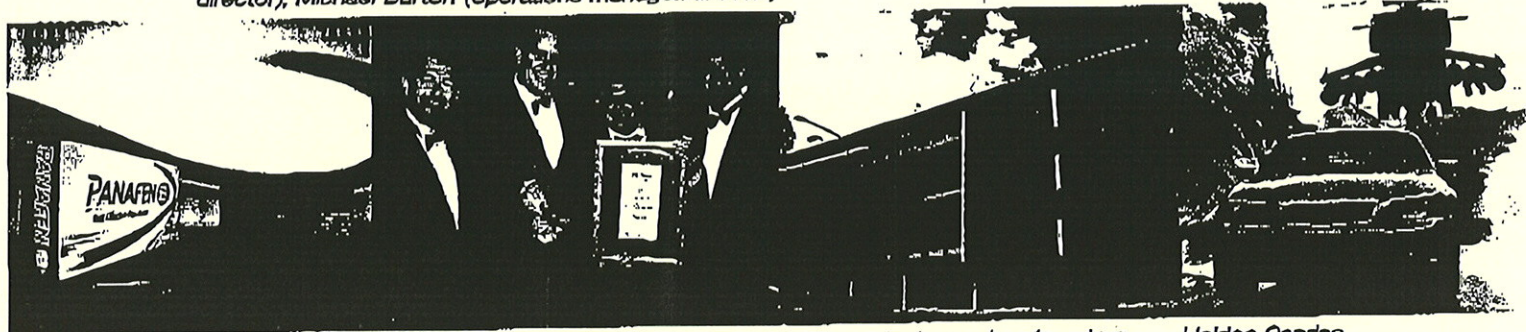
This system, developed by Cutting Edge's interactive department led by Stef Dunn, originally for Australia's *Big Brother* series, forms a database of available footage and categorizes it on an 'incident' basis. This makes the editing job far more efficient and delivers a better final product.

These days the company is recognised as a world leader in reality television post production as well as on-site live sport coverage (notably for Fox Sports), special effects for television and cinema commercials and as



Awards. From left: John Lee (chief executive officer), Michael Lawson (financial controller/director), Ray Smith (managing director), Michael Burton (operations manager/director)

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Cutting Edge's new headquarters

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specialist visual effects masters for international feature films.

In fact, the company last year received the highest accolades for its work in these areas, being recognised with a Queensland Premier's Export Award for Arts and Entertainment.

The company has also broken new ground interstate, with new telecine post production facilities in Sydney, near Fox Studios, aimed at the feature film, television series and advertising markets. It is the only such telecine facility on the south side of the harbour, which is a significant advantage teamed with support from Brisbane.

"Our Sydney facility will also help to attract work to Brisbane by offering a better service to clients," said managing director Ray Smith. "Already in the first few months of operation we are working on the largest American feature being shot in Australia at present. Team that with numerous national and international commercials and we know that the Cutting Edge ethos is being embraced by the Sydney market."

Cutting Edge's versatility is legion. The company has completed post production and visual effects on more than 750 series and feature films. That work is sure to grow through the company's new presence in Sydney as well as its \$35 million Brisbane headquarters.

### CREDITS WHERE DUE

Cutting Edge has earned its fine international credentials over the past decade with landmark TV commercial work, such as the renowned Holden ute *Thunderstruck* ad and the James Bond-style *Holden Calais* commercial. Those commercials are added to an extensive list that includes

other automotive manufacturers like Mitsubishi, Hyundai, Nissan as well as banking institutions Suncorp and Bank of Queensland, and other household names Pantene, Kellogg's, Energex, Queensland Newspapers, Fisher & Paykel, and Panadol, to name a few.

Its international TV and movie effects and post production work for *Peter Pan*, *Scooby Doo*, *Inspector Gadget 2*, *Ghost Ship*, *George of the Jungle 2*, *Flipper III and IV*, *Beastmaster*, *The Lost World*, *Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde*, *Medivac* and *Pacific Drive*, plus Indian cinema blockbuster, *Aalavandaan*.

Cutting Edge was established in 1992 by former television cameraman, John Lee, who had the philosophy of "combining outstanding technology with the best people in the business". His team of directors include hands-on staff Ray Smith as managing director, Michael Burton (operations manager) and Matthew Lawson as financial controller.

Justine Douglas, marketing manager for Cutting Edge, said the company's business now is about 50 percent TV commercial work, 40 percent movies and TV series and the remainder other multi-media and outside broadcast work.

Cutting Edge continually invests in new technology and equipment to achieve many of its effects, but Ms Douglas said the key to success rests with the creative abilities and work ethic of the Cutting Edge people.

"We want to break that new ground every time. That is how the people at Cutting Edge work."

Another way Cutting Edge is breaking new ground is through its new associations with Japanese advertising companies. MD Ray Smith has been

negotiating with Japanese companies for more than four years and now it's paying off through a range of Kellogg's commercials, starting with an animated *Choco Krispies* (Coco Pops) series currently being developed in Brisbane for the Japanese market.

Cutting Edge has hired Japanese-speaking Yukari Uchiyama as international marketing co-ordinator, to assist in developing the Japanese business and other prospects out of Asia. With cutbacks at several television stations, Cutting Edge is acknowledged as the industry's most reliable training ground in the State.

"It's a very creative environment ... there's a real buzz about the place - and that's what our clients are after when they come here. They want more than just the top equipment - they want enthusiasm and creativity and for us to share in their passion to make their project the very best it can be," said MD Ray Smith.

"Clients from Sydney or LA often enjoy coming to another location, such as Brisbane, to work on a project," Ms Douglas said. "It means they can devote their time and creative thought to that one piece of work without the interruptions of where they usually work."

And what a better place to do that in Queensland.

"It is an effect we have seen and people love coming here as well. And that's got to be even better now that we can accommodate them in our new headquarters, overlooking the Brisbane River."

For an increasing number of international film, television and advertising companies, Cutting Edge looks sharp indeed. ■

Story by Mike Sullivan