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BLVD

Press Release

Montreal, Rennes, November 12th 2014

REFUGE, a short film that reinvents the contents of tomorrow

The Institute of Research & Technology (IRT) b<>com is announcing the release of REFUGE, an experimental short film that puts technological innovation at the service of the spectator's experience. Co-produced with Jimmy Lee, the production house of international communication agency Sid Lee, and BLVD, a multi-platform content production business, it was broadcast for the first time in Nantes on October 21 during the 2nd National IRT Forum. Today, the film becomes available to all on [director Thibaut Duverneix' online platform](#).



4K resolution, Ultra HD... why not put aside pixels for a moment and focus on the audience's enjoyment? New image technologies all tend toward content that is more visually realistic in order to favour the spectator's complete immersion. And yet, the researchers who are inventing tomorrow's images and sounds seldom collaborate with the content creators who will be using them. As a result, what we end up seeing on demonstration screens are static landscapes or still-life technological tests, with colours that are often boosted. The discrepancy between the technological capacity of cameras or televisions and the reality of consumers' experiences in their living rooms is – to say the least – flagrant!

Fiction in the face of innovative technologies

With this insight in mind, b<>com formed a partnership with two renowned Canadian audiovisual production houses: Jimmy Lee, a subsidiary of international creative agency Sid Lee – of which Cirque du Soleil is a shareholder – and the BLVD group. Their goal: to put technological expertise and creativity at the service of an unprecedented immersive experience that heralds the future of entertainment.

REFUGE pulls you in with a story written by Thibaut Duverneix, a young and talented director with a passion for technologies that revolutionize the spectator's experience. His accomplice, composer David Drury, has created an exclusive soundtrack to magnify the spatialized sound. The short film is based on an intriguing, particularly esthetic, and technologically complex script, which proved a challenge to shoot. For **director Thibaut Duverneix**, "REFUGE is a unique project that allowed us to explore – in a cinematic context – new tools such as HFR* and HOA*. I wanted us to forget technology to make room for emotion and immersion."

A resolution contest is not uniquely what makes such an immersion possible: spatialized sound, captured by a microphone of exceptional quality, places the spectator at the heart of the action. Not to mention the work put into developing contrast, colour ranges, and image rhythm.

The beginning of a story

Barely out of the lab, the first version of the film was broadcasted October 21st in Nantes (West of France) as part of the IRT Forum, on a 65-inch UHD screen and rendered through headphones to help the audience appreciate the binaural sound. Other more technically complex versions are already in the

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works for 2015, including a 15-speaker reproduction and one using future screen generations. *"This first collaboration with Jimmy Lee and BLVD is truly exhilarating; watching our expert engineers, creators, and production team come together was intense, enriching, and highly productive. REFUGE allows b<>com to assert its difference by making its alliance with professional users a competitive asset for bringing adapted solutions to their problems,"* says **Bertrand Guilbaud, General Manager of b<>com.**

What Canadian partners have to say

"When b<>com approached us at C2MTL last May, we quickly saw an opportunity to extend the Sid Lee group's technological exploration. Anything that contributes to improving the immersive experience is of great interest to us." **For Richard Jean-Baptiste, President of Jimmy Lee,** this type of experimentation is crucial to the advancement of the company. *"b<>com offered us a unique opportunity to unite technology and creativity. Thibaut, the director, benefitted from great creative freedom, helping us further explore this technology which optimizes the immersive experience of tomorrow."*

"Collaborating with my long-time partners, David Drury and Mathieu Léger, on both the conceptual and musical fronts, allowed us to emphasize the connection between sound and image in order to render it in a profound and visceral fashion. This co-production was an incredible opportunity for experimentation as well as artistic and technological research," explains **Thibaut Duverneix, the director.**

Additional broadcasts in Canada and France are planned in the upcoming months.

*HFR (High Frame Rate) indicates an image rhythm superior to the current state.

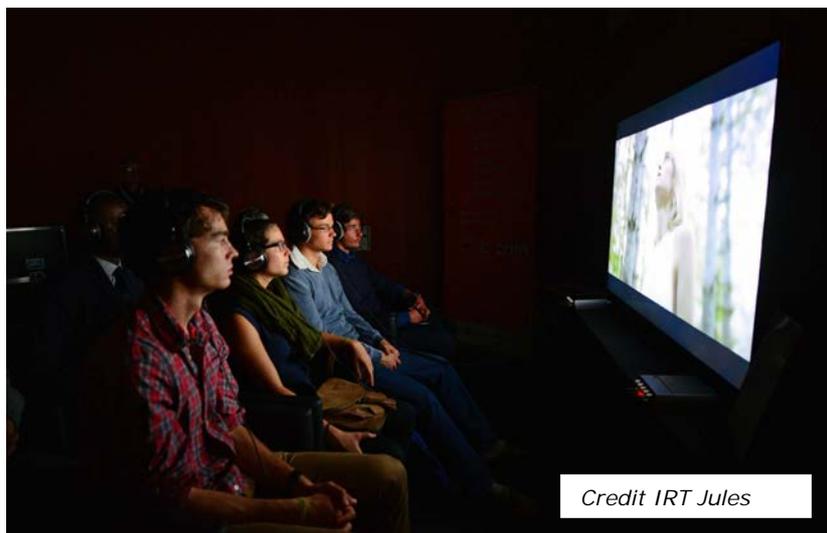
*HOA (Higher Order Ambisonics) is a process through which a sound field can be captured and represented in all its dimensions (spatialized sound).

Two technical versions of REFUGE are available today:

1 low-resolution version available online (full HD 1920x1080, binaural sound) that will let viewers discover REFUGE's story and ambiance as well as the first contributions of spatialized sound.
<https://vimeo.com/111419917>

1 high-resolution version with a few broadcasts planned in Canada and France (full resolution UHD 3840x2160, binaural sound) that will fully immerse viewers in the experience: image resolution 4 times superior, on a wide screen for a very large viewing angle.

In 2015, new versions will enrich the experience further, including a reproduction using dozens of speakers, and one using future screen generations.



Credit IRT Jules

Spectators were completely immersed in the high-resolution version of REFUGE on an Ultra HD screen with binaural sound.

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About b<>com

The b<>com Institute of Research & Technology is dedicated to boost development and marketing of tools, products and services that improve everyday's life, thanks to research and innovation in digital technologies. In concrete terms, b<>com innovates at the highest level in the areas of hypermedia (ultra high definition images, 3D sound and images, intelligent content, virtual and augmented reality, etc.), smarter and faster networks and e-health as the first area of application. It is based in Rennes and was launched at the end of 2012. It is supported by French government, Brittany Region and Cities Councils. www.b-com.com

About Jimmy Lee

Jimmy Lee was founded in 2008 as the full-service production arm of Sid Lee, the international agency based in Montreal, New York, Paris, Amsterdam, and Toronto. A lot has changed since then: media revolution, blurring lines between entertainment and branding, and a million new voices and tools clamoring for attention every day. Every step of the way, Jimmy Lee've been there, helping to make it happen, propelled by new ideas and techniques. Eschewing a costly, one-size-fits-all approach, we are equally capable of orchestrating massive shoots with big celebrities as we are of delivering compelling videos for social media in a few hours. Our agnostic approach allows us to develop contents that are truly adapted to any platform or device, from television to mobile. www.jimmylee.tv

About Sid Lee

Sid Lee is a creative services firm with 550 professionals working globally from offices in Montreal, Toronto, New York, Paris and Amsterdam. Our company creates transformative consumer experiences for brands – across all contact points – leveraging true interdisciplinary collaboration. Rooted in strategic thinking, we offer what we call *commercial creativity* services in the fields of branding, digital and social marketing, advertising, analytics, architecture and retail design, branded content and entertainment. Named "Agency of the Year" four times in the past five years, our company has earned a global reputation for its progressive work and the solid results it achieved for top-tier clients. Sid Lee is owned by a close-knit collective of 25+ partners and global creative powerhouse Cirque du Soleil.

<http://sidlee.com/en>

About BLVD

BLVD was born from the desire to offer bold, flexible and fully integrated digital services. It's an all-in-one laboratory that combines creation, design and technology with exceptional artistic unity. Our multidisciplinary and forward-thinking team allows us to evolve freely within a wide range of technologies. We count on proximity, audacity, emotion and technical agility to create unique experiences. The BLVD team continues to grow, inside and out, with innovative and challenging projects. Our second office, newly opened in New York, is managed by Danny Rosenbloom. www.blvd-mtl.com

About the director Thibaut Duverneix

After founding the creative studio Department in Montreal, Canada, in 2008 – of which he's also partner – Thibaut found his niche as a movie and interactive director. His personal and advertising work has been published and has earned him a number of prizes internationally. In 2012, he was named "Young Gun" by the Art Directors Club in New York, listing him among the 37 best creatives world-wide aged 30 and under. In 2014, he joined BLVD studio as Creative Director. Combining his music, photography, programming, animation, and film experience, Thibaut's work is interdisciplinary. "An aggressive perfectionist with a big – although selective – heart. Thibaut's world is funny, monstrous, and sensual."

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