School Spirit: A story on the man behind the Hype Videos

School spirit is a thing that brings students to the University of Mississippi, so what football school would Ole Miss be without its notorious hype videos? Interviewing Chris Sabo, a third year producer and director and one of a large team who work to create the videos that get us pumped for rebel football, he explained his journey to his now career was all from a hobby. As an adolescent in high school Chris began making pep rally videos. This experience would make another appearance in Chris’s young adult life as he began working as a freelance employee during his years as undergraduate student at Hiram College. In his junior year, Chris was chosen from over 800 applicants to be one of the eighteen to participate in an internship with NFL films. “My most memorable moment from my internship was being able to sit with then president, Steve Sabol, while he critiqued a demo reel that I had made called “The True Browns Experience.” I was sitting with a legend, the creator of my art form and we were talking about my work. I knew on that day that this is what I should be doing with my life. ” After graduating from The University of Akron with his masters and 4.0, Chris served as the Assistant Director of Multimedia Marketing at Ohio University. Although he received the opportunity through a cold call, Chris was mentored at Ohio by Emmy-Award winning and seasoned NFL Films ground cinematographer Evan Shaw. It was there Chris learned how to shoot live action, where to be, why to be there.

Ending his third season with the rebels, Chris says it’s about finding what is going to excite the audience. Each year, Senior Associate A.D. for Communications and Marketing, Michael Thompson sends out a “Game Day Experience Survey.” By listening and interpreting the data, the staff becomes aware of the interests of our fan base. This year in particular the football pregame was brand new and Chris and his staff were able to produced distinctly different videos. The four videos created this season were “Century of Vault Hemingway”; A historically based piece that honored the 100th year of Vaught Hemingway stadium, “Band Introduction”; The Pride of the South’s needed a complete overhaul, “Walk on”; a game-specific narrative that was edited every game to show moments the viewers were about to witness and “Kick Off”; a chilling video that plays right before the game starts that is sure to get rebel fans excited and the opponents shaken.

The decision to have the student-athletes claw eye black down their faces in the Kickoff video was actually based off Chris’s own personal experiences playing college sports. “Having played football through college, I have a unique perspective of game day. The eye black idea came personal experience, I used to “claw” down my eye black as a sort of ritual before I played. We tried it out in the production shoot, and it really worked. Having the relationships that we do with our student-athletes allowed them to really open up and trust that we were going to make them look good in the final project.”

Through the football season whether it be releasing game highlights the Monday after a win or storyboarding potential ideas with his team for the upcoming video, Chris also prides the department their strong intern program. “We offer our most reliable and capable students the opportunity to produce content for a SEC football program. With the direction of full-time employees, our students gain hands-on experience within our discipline and will be ready for full-time jobs when their time with us comes to an end. I cannot say enough about the support that we receive from our director Micah Ginn and the administration as a whole. Due to substantial investment in both staff and equipment, we are functioning at an extremely high level right now. Without the tireless work from the entire department, an undertaking such as this could not be possible. ”, proving Ole Miss’s spirit is truly on and off the field.