

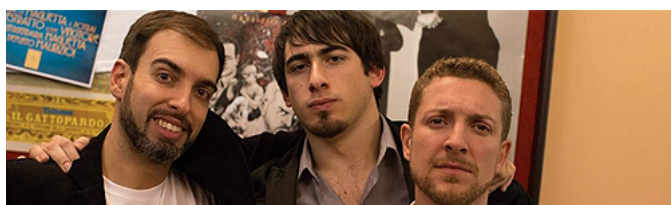

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Michelangelo Frisoni: Italian Web Series? A small budget but a large desire to go far!



He is a 22 year old Italian and has already collaborated with different youtubers and videomakers including Freddie Wong. In this interview, we present Michelangelo Frisoni: a young and talented **VFX Digital Compositor** who has been able to make a career out of his passion for video-editing during the last two years by bringing his know-how to YouTube. His resume includes various successful web projects including "Video Game High School", "Cotto e Frullato", "Fuga dalla Morte" and "Metal Gear Solid: Philanthropy II".



1. Our first question arises spontaneously. How does a young Italian come to work with a web-star like Freddie Wong from the USA?

As soon as I finished high school, I began to work towards my professional goals by finding international contacts and other Italians at Los Angeles in the world of cinema. I planned to develop my skills not only in visual effects but also in directing and post-production by taking courses at UCLA. During this trip to the United States, I had the opportunity and luck to meet important individuals of the web including Freddie Wong, MysteryGuitarMan, and Mike Diva with whom I am collaborating with in Italy. Freddie Wong appreciated my showreel at the time, and he mentioned a possibility to contribute to his web series "Video Game High School." I ended up working on the special effects for both seasons of that web series.

2. Other than "Video Game High School," have you worked on other web series?

Yes! I had the fortune of working on Meridian, a web series licensed by MysteryGuitarMan, creating different particle systems that were used in the series to show past events that the protagonist (Orlando Jones) was able to see through a magical medallion



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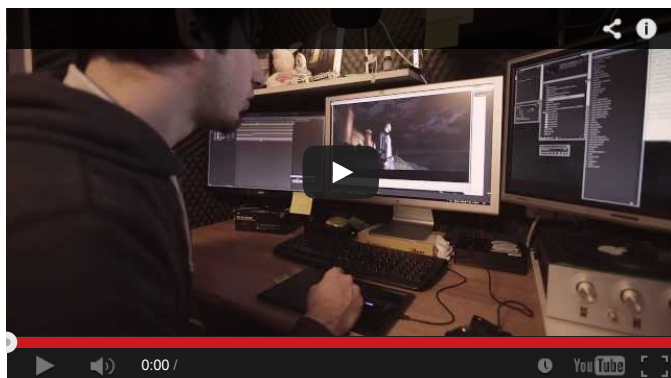


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Instead, in Italy, I collaborated with two different web series. The first entitled "Cotto e Frullato," directed by Paolo Cellammare and acted by Maurizio Merluzzo, is a series that received much success due to its new format and unique comedy (I invite everyone to watch it!). For this series, I inserted Maurizio Merluzzo next to his teacher Arnold Schwarzenegger, created explosions and debris in CG, and implemented other effects that recall the first Terminator when Maurizio returns to direct the program of alternative reality. The other web series I collaborated with is "Fuga dalla Morte," written and directed by Michael Righini. This series required my work in many different shots, and the requests were quite complicated. I needed to transform a castle on a hill of Gradara (PU) into a castle surrounded by the sea and create a portal of fire that would eventually need to be crossed by some of the characters (requiring additional iterations). I also needed to create two time freezes in which bullets needed to stop in mid-air while Michael Righini walked through them and... many other special effects including extensions of landscapes with oceans instead of hills or cities. Then, there were also the battle scenes. In this web series, I supervised the effects for the first time on set, and I learned many things.



3. What do you think are the differences between web series produced in Italy and those produced in the USA?

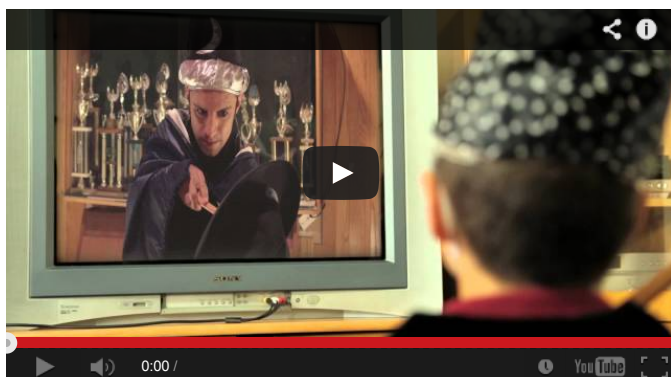
The main difference is that the American series are able to obtain a much larger budget compared to Italian series due to the larger public that uses YouTube in the United States. However, I noticed that Italians are able to work very well with limited budgets and fully utilize the instruments at hand even if they might not be at the level that we would like. We Italians are growing and have a lot of potential that YouTube and the Internet in general are helping us to develop. Obviously, in the United States, there are a lot of cinema productions that invest in developing youtubers. This allows for a true economy founded on the creativity of new web series, something that is missing in Italy (but is slowly evolving).

4. Do you think Italian projects like "Cotto e Frullato" and "Fuga della Morte" could work in the States?

I think so! I think these series could reach new heights with a wider audience and a larger budget due to investors and producers that are always looking for new material (something present in both series). The ideas and proposals that the creators of both series have if they had larger budgets are incredible and could compete with other American series.

5. How do you become a VFX Digital Compositor? As an expert, what advice do you give to those just starting out in the world of visual effects?

I have been working as a compositor for two and a half years. The more projects that I work on, the more I realize that I am just at the beginning of this intriguing and complicated profession. It is a profession with many different facets that never fails to keep progressing. I began to work on effects at the age of 15 when I discovered the program FX Home which I thought, at the time, was one of the best things that could have happened to me. I loved the explosions and the laser swords, and I wanted to awe my friends with adrenaline-filled videos. Therefore, in time, I discovered After Effect and other tutorials that you could find online via YouTube or sites like VideoCopilot. I taught myself using these programs and, eventually, (thanks to my father) I found the site vfxwizard.com that I believe to be the best school (online and in-person) of digital effects and digital cinematography in Italy. I enrolled in the course of After Effect that gave me a solid theoretical and practical foundation on which I would build my career. VFX Wizard helped me also with the course Nuke (a standard program of compositing for the cinematography industry that will soon replace After Effect). VFX Wizard is the best advice I can give to someone who wants to work in the sector of special effects; it is an important tool in order to stay on top of the new innovations and opportunities in the field!



6. Are there certain visual effects that are more difficult to create? Or is it just a matter of practice?

Every shot is different, and the thrill is in trying to adapt to the needs of that particular shot (finding alternative methods or innovations of old techniques that can be applied to every clip). Rotoscoping (a technique that allows the user to cut a piece of video in order to isolate or remove a particular element) is used in almost every shot in order to remove objects, fix colors or the luminosity, or to extend the landscape. Even if it seems simple or short, each shot can require months of work. Also, the techniques used can differ according to the scene or request. 3D Tracking is used to insert 3D objects into a scene; Set Extension is used to extend the landscape; Keying is used to insert people and/or objects shot in a different location. Then, you need to fix the light, shadows, and color so that all of the inserted material in CG looks as though it was all shot together.

7. You said that in order to study and build experience you immediately turned to foreign countries. Do you think that this is still a niche industry in Italy? If so, why?

Unfortunately, it is still a niche industry. I think this is due to the fact that film production in Italy does not require extensive VFX interventions if just to resolve issues such as a microphone on set, shadows or reflections of operators on set, or a rather simple special effect. For this reason, I think that the visual effects industry finds more work in commercials or independent productions than feature films. However, there are some production and post-production companies that work extensively for foreign productions. I believe that Hive Division is an example of this. Hive Division is an excellent production company responsible for creating Metal Gear Solid: Philanthropy (an independent Italian feature film that had success throughout the world and tells the story of the videogame Metal Gear Solid). Hive Division was responsible for all of the VFX, and I invite you all to watch it! [Link: <http://hivedivision.net/portfolio/mgs-philanthropy>].

8. I read that you recently created a music video with Mike Diva. Tell us how that was.

He contacted me on Facebook to ask me for help with Keying (green screen) and Matchmoving (3D Tracking). I recently finished my work, and I am happy to have been part of that team. He said it was his first project that made such extensive use of VFX, so I was very excited to be a part of that. Unfortunately, I cannot give any spoilers or publicize any screenshots, but I can say that it will be a dubstep video of the musical group Destroid with a lot of movement; there are a lot of effects! Diva was very open, and he valued my work, allowing me access to high-quality material. He gave me the opportunity to implement 3D Tracking that I had never been able to do before. This project taught me innumerable professional lessons.

9. Future web projects that you will be involved in?

I will work on the second season of "Cotto e Frullato" and the third season of "Video Game High School." Mike Diva already told me that he will need me for a number of future projects... I will also be going to Hive Division to work on a web sci-fi film financed by Kickstarter called "Aurora."



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