



BRINGING MR PEANUT

(BACK) TO LIFE

*How Silver Spoon entertained
millions with real-time animation
during the Super Bowl.*



Photography: Courtesy of Silver-spoon

Just one week before the 2020 Super Bowl, Mr. Peanut sacrificed himself to save his friends.

Left without its 104 year old mascot, snack food brand Planters needed to do something big to make a marketing splash on the day of the game. Creative use of motion capture and real-time animation technology proved to be the well-received solution.

Mr Peanut sacrificed himself in an explosive commercial but, in a move worthy of Game of Thrones, he was brought back to life as Baby Nut. Planters, VaynerMedia and Silver Spoon teamed up to introduce Baby Nut to the world during a 4.5-hour animated livestream running on Twitter during and after the 2020 Super Bowl. It was something that hadn't been seen at that scale before – an animated character responding live, in real-time, to a worldwide audience following along through Twitter.

Game actress Erica Citrin, with direction from director Marcus Perry, took on the role of Baby Nut for the duration of the livestream Silver Spoon's Vicon motion capture set-up allowed Baby Nut to play, dance and delight viewers throughout the entire performance.

The stunt was a hit, with 1.9 million people viewing the livestream, 20.9k likes, 5.8k comments and 4.6k retweets. It was mentioned in a host of publications, including Vanity Fair, BuzzFeed, Vox, The Daily Mail, Mashable and Business Insider. The campaign wasn't just a success for Planters, it was also a big step into an exciting new frontier for Silver Spoon.

THE ROAD TO REAL-TIME

Silver Spoon was originally conceived by founder Dan Pack as a one-stop shop for visual effects support to other businesses working in the field. Motion capture was initially a small part of the equation, but it became apparent that there was a gap in the market and mocap grew as part of Silver Spoon's business.

Over time- that motion capture offering has evolved further into real-time animation. "We're being much more involved in the creative end, too, and taking our technology and years of experience working in this format, and applying that to these new types of opportunities and new types of engagements with viewers," says Pack.

Silver Spoon's Vicon setup, which can capture 12 or more people at once with its 48 Vantage cameras and Shōgun software, is a crucial element of the equation. "For production, we still consider it the gold standard," says Pack. "It's just unbelievably powerful."

He points to developments in fingertracking as especially important to Silver Spoon's work. "Finger tracking has always been a complex issue. They are small, they cover each other, they are complicated! Vicon has always been leading the pack in pushing mocap development and they were the first to really nail down proper finger tracking."

"So now, we're capturing unbelievable finger movement, which is such a big deal, especially when you're doing any type of real-time engagement with a client. It adds a depth and realism to characters that body language and facial expression alone can't offer", says Pack. Then Shōgun, plugged into Unreal Engine, enables the turnaround speed that Silver Spoon needs to generate animation in real time.



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DAN PACK
Founder
Silver Spoon

WITH TECHNOLOGIES LIKE VICON AND UNREAL ENGINE, SILVER SPOON CAN TURN AROUND LARGE VOLUMES OF CONTENT QUICKLY WHILE STILL RETAINING A VERY HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY.



LAURA HERZING
Executive Producer
Silver Spoon

REAL-TIME ANIMATION ON A NATIONAL STAGE

The Planters campaign was a bold move, using Silver Spoon's real-time approach in front of an audience of millions. The team built a virtual, interactive bedroom for Baby Peanut ahead of time, and then created physical props in the studio that were twice their normal size to reflect the fact that Baby Peanut is only half the size of the actress. Vicon's ability to track multiple props made the integration between the two seamless.

When the big game rolled around, Silver Spoon was ready. "The technical

aspect of it wasn't really different from what we've done in the past," says Laura Herzing, Executive Producer at Silver Spoon. "The difference was that we distributed it via a live stream. So, we had a truly interactive back and forth with the Twitter community, which was something that we hadn't done before, that the brand hadn't done before."

"I think it was, from our perspective, technically a great success," she adds. "And I think from the brand's perspective, we achieved what they were going for. They got a lot of eyeballs, they got a lot of attention. They were able to really roll out this character in a groundbreaking new format."



LOOKING FORWARD

Silver Spoon has big plans for the future. One avenue the studio plans to explore alongside the character work is real-time photorealistic shoots done in-engine, enabling actors to be filmed live 'on location' anywhere in the world without having to leave the studio.

"We can utilize this technology to tell engaging stories and to create rich interaction between viewers or consumers," says Pack. "And if we can do it in a way, like with any good VFX,

that makes less of a spectacle of the technology and allows people to interact with characters in a way that's more seamless, that's what we're all about.

"With technologies like Vicon and Unreal Engine, Silver Spoon can turn around large volumes of content quickly while still retaining a very high level of quality."

"We're poised, I think, to do a lot more of it," adds Herzing. "Because what brand doesn't want their character to be able to really interact live with people? That's the next level."

