

# THE INTERVIEW ISSUE

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ABOUT BRAINSTORMING,  
IDEA-SHARING AND  
INCORPORATING CHANGE  
INTO THEIR EVENTS.



**Jeffrey Hornaday**  
on Taking a Passion  
and Making It Happen



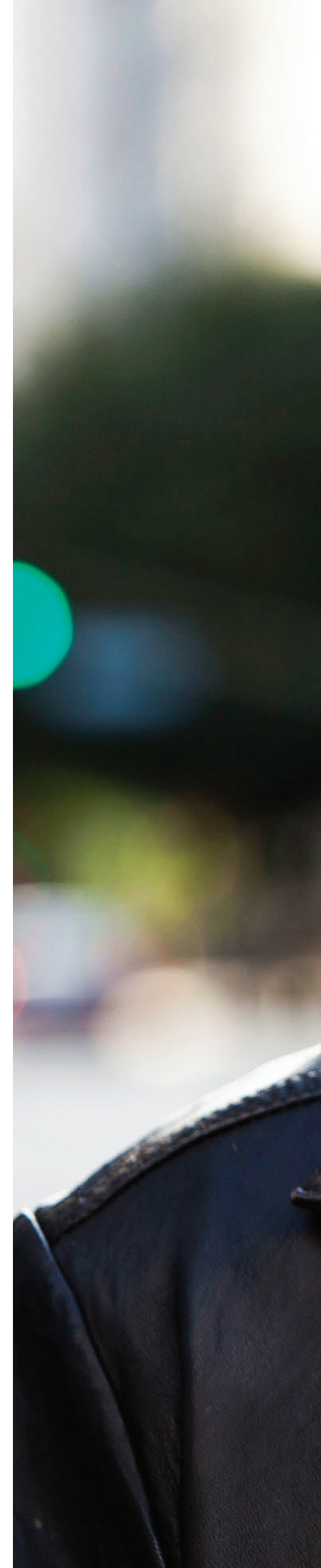
**Barbara Hartgrove**  
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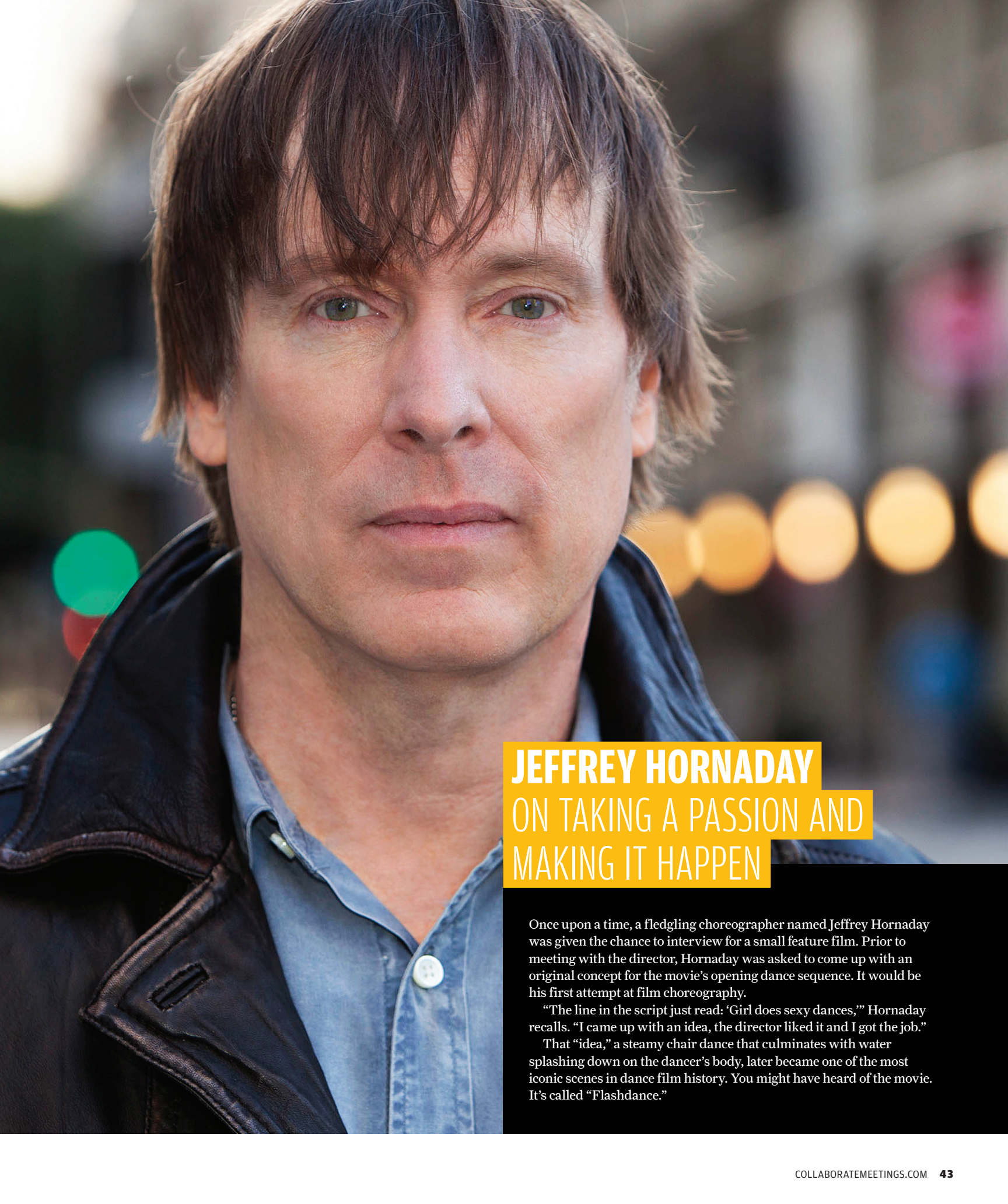
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## JEFFREY HORNADAY ON TAKING A PASSION AND MAKING IT HAPPEN

Once upon a time, a fledgling choreographer named Jeffrey Hornaday was given the chance to interview for a small feature film. Prior to meeting with the director, Hornaday was asked to come up with an original concept for the movie's opening dance sequence. It would be his first attempt at film choreography.

"The line in the script just read: 'Girl does sexy dances,'" Hornaday recalls. "I came up with an idea, the director liked it and I got the job."

That "idea," a steamy chair dance that culminates with water splashing down on the dancer's body, later became one of the most iconic scenes in dance film history. You might have heard of the movie. It's called "Flashdance."



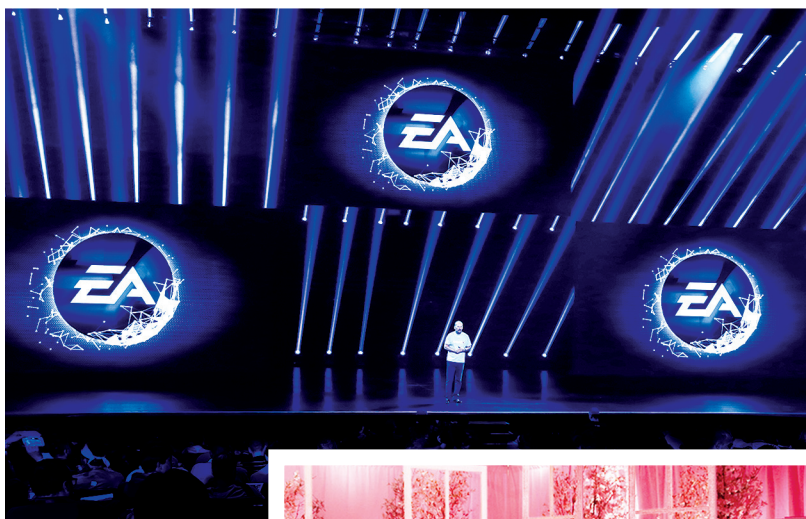
Fast forward 30 years, and the man behind those famous moves has since cultivated a rich, multifaceted career choreographing and directing a plethora of well-known films, television productions and live music concerts, as well as conceiving and directing live marketing events and product launches for some of the world's top companies. Hornaday's corporate client list reads like a veritable who's who of recognized brands, including Nissan, Microsoft, Electronic Arts, Lexus, Nike, Intel and Honda.

Similar to how he landed his big break in the film business, Hornaday nailed his first corporate gig thanks to out-of-box creativity and theatrical sensibilities that enable him to turn simple concepts into larger-than-life, all-encompassing event experiences.

"The first one that blew up big for me was Nissan," says Hornaday. "They were relaunching the 240Z after 25 years [as] the 350Z, and it was a huge deal. They got so many pre-orders for the car that the CEO realized he didn't have to kill himself with the marketing, so he threw it out to some creative teams and said, 'Here's \$10 million. Let's come up with something that will reach a youth demographic. Go find somebody with a good idea.' It went out to all the big agencies, but a friend and I worked up a concept and it won the bid."

That concept—a nod to the famed spontaneous live performance the Beatles gave on the Apple Records rooftop in 1969—turned out to be the Z Tour, a groundbreaking campaign and nationwide musical tour of free, unannounced shows that featured well-known artists including No Doubt, the White Stripes and Sheryl Crow. Hornaday describes the campaign as 25 cities with 25 of the world's biggest bands, all deliberately unbranded, letting the knowledge that Nissan produced the show spread by word of mouth. "It [gave] Nissan the street cred they were looking for with the young demographic," Hornaday says. "It went really well and that kind of kicked off my working in that world."

Although he still maintains a strong presence in the film, TV and music industries, Hornaday enjoys the diversity of working in the event world in his role as creative director of Plumbago Productions, a San Francisco-based media and event production company.



Hornaday has designed event experiences for companies including EA Sports and Ubisoft and performers like Miley Cyrus (opposite page).

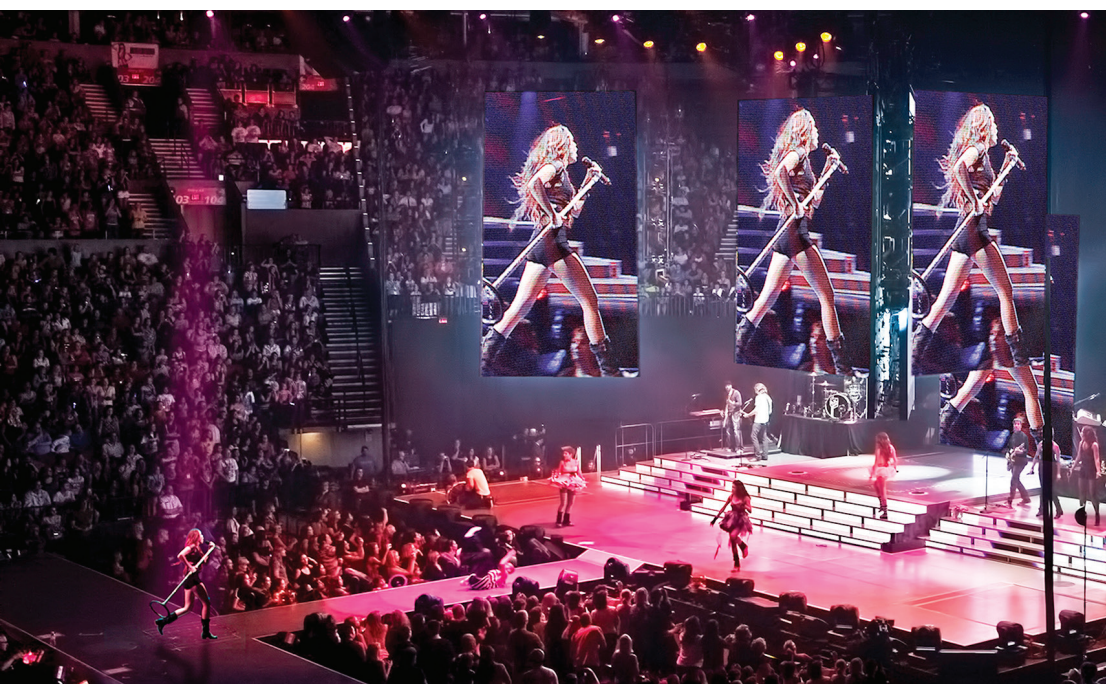


JEFF GRABERY



“

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“What I like about [corporate events] is that because the projects are on a tight timeline and they're usually one show, you have good budgets that allow you to come up with something innovative, and it doesn't take a year to do it,” says Hornaday. “I think the reason companies like to work with us is because I have an entertainment background and we bring an entertainment approach sensibility to the event.”

In essence, corporate events are just another medium that allow Hornaday to express himself creatively. From animation and pyrotechnics to live action and music

integrated with motion graphics, Hornaday enjoys experimenting with a grab bag of visual arts and multimedia and uses them to entertain and evoke an emotional connection between a company's brand and its audience.

“[Corporate events] are a natural extension of my abilities but they push me even further,” says Hornaday. He's directed concerts for Michael Jackson, Madonna and Paul McCartney, and he says the mix of multimedia, live video and graphics of those events helped him visualize what he could do for other events. “That was a really good preparation for moving into the event world,” he says. “The thing that's

fun with pop shows is the goal is to coordinate those things in such a way where they become really seamless. That translates nicely to the corporate work, because that's really the goal—to keep on message but do it in a way that's cohesive and entertaining.”

But sometimes the projects with the most entertainment value can also be the most challenging to execute, such as one of Hornaday's most memorable concepts that involved taking an animated commercial and recreating it with live actors.

“Nissan had done a really fun commercial a while back featuring an animated GI Joe taking Barbie on a date,” says Hornaday. “The challenge was that you didn't have the complete free license of animation, and you couldn't do cuts and jump them from place to place. So the question was, how do we keep that original sensibility without feeling like it was an edited piece? The way we arrived at doing that was having 15 doubles for each one of the characters. For example, one of the characters who was in a three-story set we'd built would wave down to the boy below, stick her head back in the window, then one second later come out the front door. We had to have all this massive choreography and impeccable timing to do what felt like film editorial cuts in live action, all worked out to music and coordinated with a car racing around inside an interior setting. It was a short piece that lasted maybe 90 seconds, but it took weeks of rehearsal and production design to make it appear simple.”

So what is Hornaday's secret to success? It all comes down to a winning combination of great client relationships, a supportive executive producer and a talented team of creative collaborators. “What you hunger for creatively is to be in a relationship with a client where you really fall in love, where things just click and sparks fly,” says Hornaday. “If you can get that going then you can catch lightning in a bottle and come up with stuff that's original and also supported by the client [because] they believe in you and you believe in them. And if you can connect and work with people who have the same passionate intensity as you, then stuff will be created that you've never conceived of and so much more will come that way.”

What a feeling.

—Lisa Plummer Savas