



screen magazine

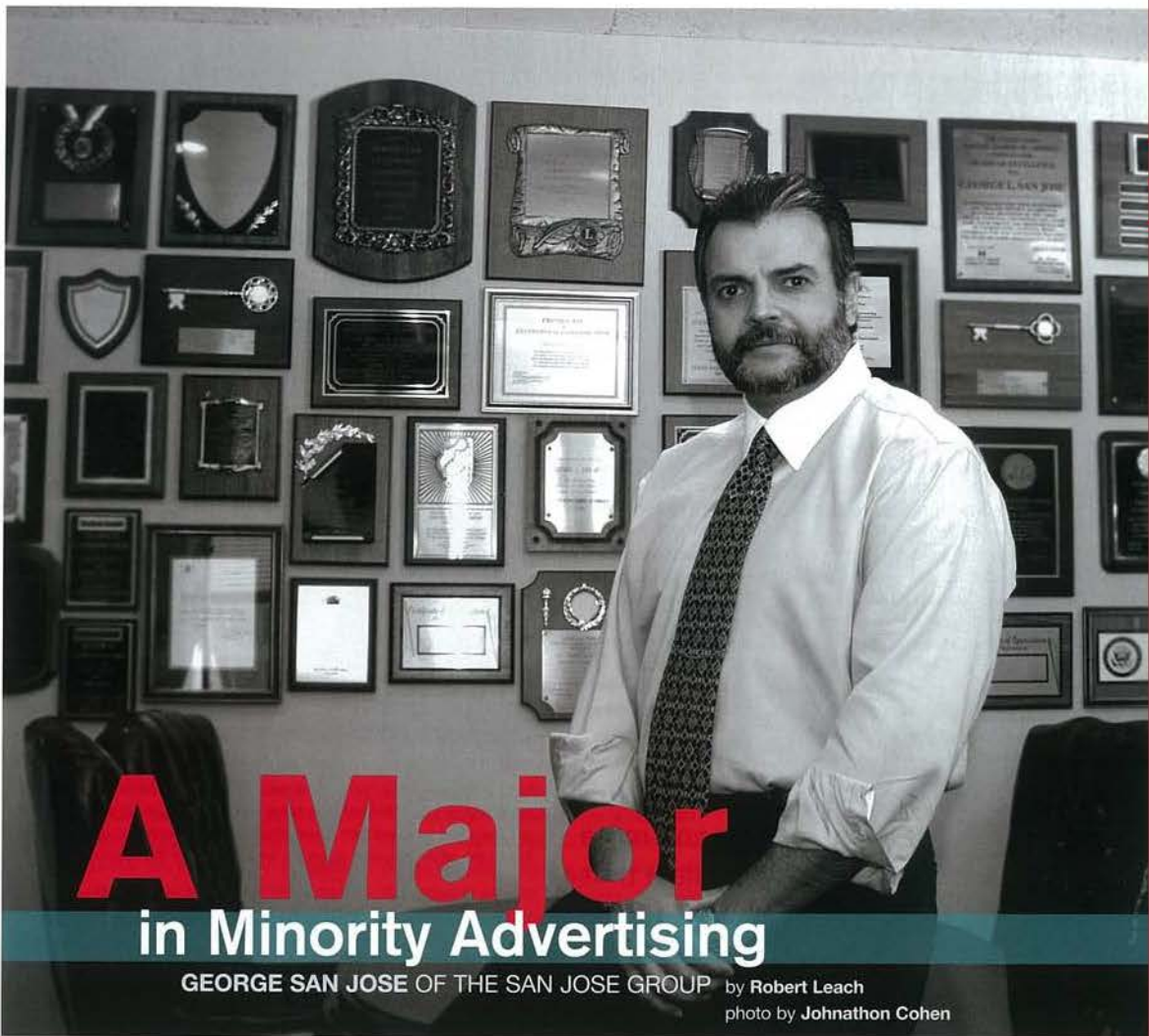
3/22/04 • Volume 25 No. 6 • \$4.00

the midwest's creative source

GEORGE SAN JOSE A Major In Minority Advertising



Midwest **Stages**
Midwest **Production**



A Major in Minority Advertising

GEORGE SAN JOSE OF THE SAN JOSE GROUP by Robert Leach

photo by Johnathon Cohen

The Chicago advertising community has been blessed with several creative geniuses who, through their work, have changed pop culture in the U.S. throughout the past 25 years. George San Jose, Chairman and COO of The San Jose Group, is among this elite group of visionaries and industry champions. In the past 25 years, the advertising culture has seen dramatic changes, both in economic impact and ethnicity, that have kept most marketers on their toes.

The rise of the web generation gets most of the attention, but one should note a less frequently cited and stable fact: the rise of the Hispanic population, which has eclipsed even the most liberal population estimates given so long ago. Before the 1980 census, the Hispanic market was pegged around 7.9 million; the U.S. Hispanic population is now roughly 40 million, according to the federal government. The Hispanic market is slowly becoming "the market" in terms of economic impact felt by corporations desperate for market share.

This comes as no surprise to San Jose and his creative ad shop located

on Michigan Avenue. All he had to do was look out his window. San Jose is widely considered a pioneering expert on the demographics of the Hispanic market, and more importantly, on how to translate these numbers to positively affect the bottom line of his clients.

Prior to 1981, San Jose headed the Hispanic division of D'Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles out of an office in the old Standard Oil building. Convincing corporate America of the growing Hispanic market at a time when few would take it seriously was his job, and to put it mildly, he

I will not be defeated and I remained specialized in one thing as opposed to many of my colleagues who ventured out into many different areas.

SCREEN MAGAZINE 21

was good at it. His keen understanding of the market, coupled with his intense passion to succeed, led Mr. San Jose to create his own agency in December 1981.

The growth of the Hispanic market has translated to the growth of San Jose's full-service creative shop that now supports 32 employees with annual billings of \$42.3 million. Some of their clients include ComEd, American TransAir, Inc. (ATA), Hanes Hosiery and large regional grocer Dominick's. Speaking with San Jose with regard to where he typically shoots and the motivations behind choosing a location, he made it clear that costs for production are a key factor in his decision. However, more consideration is given to the quality of talent. "Costs always come into play," says San Jose. "There used to be a time when Mexico was pretty much the only country, short of Brazil, out of the U.S. that could deliver the film and talent quality required. Mexico at one point was considerably less expensive than the U.S. was. That is no longer true. Mexico is as expensive as houses are here at this point. So there is really no advantage filming in Mexico versus the United States. Now, I am talking on average. [If] I am going to do a spot that requires a lot of set building and we need to film 18 hours or more, then yes, Mexico might be an attraction but not a night and day attraction. The ranges in pricing are pretty much the same. We just bid out several spots to houses in the U.S. and Mexico, and despite the differences, they all came back in the same range. If you give someone a blueprint to bid on, they will all come back in a similar range."

SCREEN asked San Jose whether he would consider relocating where

San Jose is widely considered a pioneering expert on the demographics of the Hispanic market, and more importantly, on how to translate these numbers to positively affect the bottom line of his clients.

his productions were shot if he received a government-funded financial incentive – hypothetically, a 25 percent rebate. "Obviously if there was financial benefit to my client to do so, we would be forced to look at it more closely," he answered. "I will tell you though that talent is more often than not the primary concern. Costs can rise when you extend shooting days due to creative conflicts that eat away at any potential up-front cost savings." When asked if an incentive to court more of the vendors he uses to open offices within the state made sense in his opinion, without hesitation his response was, "yes."

In 1996, the Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies (AHAA) was co-founded by San Jose, who now serves as its treasurer after serving two terms as the association's director. The advertising agency members number more than 30 with annual billings of approximately \$2 billion – numbers which should enlighten many in the Midwest production community. Courting this business is relatively simple: join their membership. "One of the things we always try to do is, if you're supporting the association, you will gain an advantage," says San Jose. "There are many production companies who have joined, and I always instruct my people to look first in AHAA membership when bidding out work. If we are filming



food, I am going say, 'Who is the best at filming food?' and that is who I am going to hire. Obviously the firms who are supporting our association are the ones who will get preferential treatment with not only ourselves but to the other Hispanic agencies who belong to the association."

AHAA conducts conferences each year and publishes a membership directory, the "Blue Book," found at the associations website (www.ahaa.org). The site details the member agencies and the clients they serve. This is an invaluable tool when seeking to do business with the association. In addition to the directory, the site contains valuable market information and corporate budgeting information.

San Jose credits God for his success. "I'm very blessed," states San Jose. "I think I owe it all to God. He is the one who chose this career for me. He has given me the wisdom to guide the business according to the changes the business has had to make through the years to stay competitive. I also think my stubbornness [helps], perhaps. I will not be defeated and I remained specialized in one thing as opposed to many of my colleagues who ventured out into many different areas. I came from a marketing and sales background and fell into the whole marketing communication end of the business. So I understand from being on the street and knocking on doors what it takes to move products, which is an element I think I bring to the table." It is refreshing to know Mr. San Jose is a man of character and strong family values.

Our community is blessed by his participation and his representation of the Hispanic community to others throughout the world in his business dealings. Finding ways to build bridges to such stable individuals should be the focus of our continued efforts to build a strong production community in the Midwest.

[//www.thesanjosegroup.com](http://www.thesanjosegroup.com)

22 MARCH 22, 2004

George L. San Jose President & Chief Creative Officer of The San Jose Group a Multicultural Advertising Agency

THE
SAN JOSE
GROUP