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Visual Effects Society

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Visual Effects Society & Quebec Film and Television Council Launch 5-Part Webinar Series to Destigmatize Mental Health and Provide Industry Support

Collaborative Initiative with the financial support of the City of Montreal Features Insights from Leading VFX Pros and Professional Mental Health Guidance

Los Angeles (July 7, 2021) – Today, the Visual Effects Society (VES), the industry’s global professional honorary society, and the Quebec Film and Television Council (QFTC) launched ***Reignite Yourself – Instruments to Face Daily Life***, a five-part Webinar series around mental health to support the worldwide visual effects industry. The free, open source episodes feature conversations with veteran visual effects professionals and mental health professionals, providing both personal insights *and* expert guidance. This video series is the first initiative of the VES’ new global Health and Wellbeing Committee co-chaired by Emma Clifton Perry, VES 1st Vice Chair and Philipp Wolf, VES Montreal Chair. It is part of the QFTC’s *Release Your Creativity* project, which is made possible thanks to the financial support of the City of Montreal, the NAD-UQAC School, as well as partner studios Caribara, DNEG, Framestore, Method Studios, Reel FX and Technicolor (through its three brands Mikros, MPC and Mr X).

Reignite Yourself covers a spectrum of issues around mental health, including dealing with stress and anxiety, dealing with high-pressure situations, maintaining work-life balance, empathy and handling negative feedback and creating a growth mindset through confidence building and motivation. The episodes feature conversations with acclaimed VFX practitioners sharing real-life experiences, including ***Chris White*** (VFX Supervisor, Weta Digital), ***John Dykstra*** (Academy Award-winning special effects pioneer), ***Kaitlyn Yang*** (VFX Supervisor, Alpha Studios), ***Monica Lago-Kaytis*** (Producer/CEO, Frogbot Films) and ***Mark Osborne*** (Director, Netflix), and mental health specialists ***Dr. Melanie Bilbul*** (Psychiatrist, CHUM), ***Dr. Amal Abdel-Baki*** (Psychiatrist, CHUM), ***Dr. Drea Letamendi*** (Clinical Psychologist, UCLA Student Resilience Center) and ***Camille Charbonneau*** (Mental Performance Consultant). The series – available in both webinar and podcast formats on <https://bit.ly/VESReignite>, vfx-montreal.com, Spotify and Apple podcasts - is accompanied by resources to contact mental health professionals for assistance. Chapter 1 is now live.

“The VES is committed to supporting the health and welfare of our members and the VFX community at large,” said ***Lisa Cooke***, VES Board Chair. “We take our role seriously in working to create a safer, healthier and more equitable environment for VFX artists and practitioners worldwide and I’m gratified that our

Society is demonstrating its leadership through our new Health and Wellbeing Committee. Developed in collaboration with our partners in Montreal, the *Reignite Yourself* series is a meaningful step towards enhancing our shared industry experience.”

“Our mental health is something we tend to ignore and not take ownership of,” said **Philipp Wolf**, Co-Chair, VES Health and Wellbeing Committee and producer/creator/moderator of the *Reignite Yourself* series. “It is of great significance for us to actively change this behavior and acknowledge its importance. Only then can we truly excel in this fast paced animation and visual effects environment. We need to create a space in which it is normal to openly speak about mental health, and I hope this web series sets the stage for many conversations.”

“The Québec Film and Television Council (QFTC) is proud to contribute to making our industry an inclusive and safe space, where everyone can grow and express their creativity without barriers,” said **Valérie Daigneault**, Director of the Secretariat of the Audiovisual Cluster at the QFTC. “Quebec is now one of the three largest VFX and animation hubs in the world, not only because of its competitive business environment, but also because of the diversity and inventiveness of our talent. Thanks to the City of Montreal’s support, we are happy to help open the conversation around mental health, so everyone can feel free to join in. This conversation is about all of us, and we hope that these episodes will be widely shared and listened to by artists in Quebec and around the world.”

Additional Quotes from Reignite Yourself Participants

“The stresses of our industry can affect our mental health, physical health, family, and relationships. We need to acknowledge mental health with the same importance we apply to safety on-set and in the office place.” – **Chris White**, VFX Supervisor, Weta Digital

“Visual effects is a high pressure work environment. It is critical to relieve that pressure intermittently with physical and psychological relaxation. Mental exploration and recreation outside of the work environment is part of the mental maintenance that will prevent burnout.” - **John Dykstra**, Academy Award-winning VFX pioneer

“We have to be diligent about putting in the same amount of time on improving our mental health, as we did on improving our visual effects skills, in order to enhance our work environment and drain toxicity.” – **Kaitlyn Yang**, VFX Supervisor, Alpha Studios

“We are all dealing with varying degrees of mental health issues, and the more we can share our experiences, and hear about the experiences of others, the more we can find our commonality and feel less alone.” – **Mark Osborne**, Director, Netflix

“For too many years, the discussion of mental health has been taboo. We know that organizational sources of stress take a variety of forms. It is our Responsibility as employers and employees in the field to create a framework that is safe and supportive to discuss those stressors.” - **Monica Lago-Kaytis**, Producer/CEO, Frogbot Films

"Now, more than ever, it is important to call on each other to make space and open up dialogue about our mental well-being. Conversations bring us endless possibilities for increased awareness, community-building, and improved quality of life." – **Dr. Drea Letamendi**, Clinical Psychologist, UCLA Student Resilience Center

"I believe that normalizing the challenges we all face plays an important role in helping people feel less vulnerable to get the resources and help they need to live happier and more fulfilling lives." - **Camille Charbonneau**, Mental Performance Consultant

"Talking about mental health helps overcome stigma and foster closer connections with others." - **Dr. Melanie Bilbul**, Psychiatrist, CHUM

"Your mind is your best asset: take care of it!" – **Dr. Amal Abdel-Baki**, Psychiatrist, CHUM

About the Visual Effects Society

The Visual Effects Society is a professional global honorary society dedicated to advancing the arts, sciences and applications of visual effects and to upholding the highest standards and procedures for the visual effects profession. It is the entertainment industry's only official organization representing the extended global community of visual effects practitioners, including supervisors, artists, producers, technology developers, educators and studio executives. VES' more than 4,000 members in 40 countries worldwide contribute to all areas of entertainment – film, television, commercials, animation, music videos, games and new media.

To learn more about the VES, visit www.visualeffectssociety.com and follow us on Twitter @VFX Society. Read our signature publication *VFX Voice* at www.vfxvoice.com

About the Québec Film and Television Council (QFTC)

Created in 2006, the QFTC is a non-profit organization that contributes to the development and competitiveness of Quebec as a world-class multi-screen production hub. As an economic development agency, its mission is to generate investments in Quebec by leveraging competitive tax incentive programs, the expertise of industry members, the province's architectural diversity, the quality of its infrastructure and the ability of the industry to export its products to foreign markets.

The QFTC receives support from its partners: Air Canada, BFL Canada, Corporate Stays, Demers Beaulne, Difuze, EP Canada, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, Hôtel Gault/Monville, Germain Hôtels, Grandé Studios, Hybride, Miller Thomson, Hôtel Mount Stephen, Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton, Rodeo FX, Technicolor, Hôtel William Gray, as well as from the different levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal.

For additional information, visit www.qftc.ca.