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## Video taps Memphis 'cool' to lure young professionals

In new recruiting tool, city's best and brightest tout a city that's on the move, filled with opportunity and fun

By **Amos Maki**  
Contact  
March 26, 2006

Wild Bill's, the raucous Midtown hole-in-the-wall that sells beer in 40-ounce bottles, may not strike most Memphians as a recruiting tool to lure young professionals to the Bluff City, but a new video does just that.

"My Memphis," a film directed and produced by artist Christopher Reyes, uses Wild Bill's -- a legendary blues bar at Vollintine and Avalon -- and an assortment of people, places and things to do to recruit young professionals to Memphis -- an effort that is becoming increasingly important as cities compete to attract talent.

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"The cool thing about this is we didn't script this," said Reyes, the creator of Live from Memphis, a popular Web site devoted mostly to the local music scene. "We just set the cameras up and people told us what they liked about Memphis."

The video will get its first public airing Wednesday, when it will be presented by the Memphis Regional Chamber, Memphis Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Memphis and Shelby County Film Commission at the Malco Cinema Paradiso.

Craig Brewer, the Memphis writer and director responsible for "Hustle & Flow" who is currently wrapping up his next film, "Black Snake Moan," appears in the video and will introduce it at the Paradiso.

A Web site, mymemphis.tv, will also be launched the day of the premiere, and the Chamber plans on sending the video to college campuses nationwide and human resource offices throughout the Mid-South.

The video could be a valuable tool for businesses eager to recruit the best and brightest and desperate to smash the stereotype of Memphis as a sleepy river town.

"We have found that it can be challenging to bring people to the city," said Mary Anne Quinn, vice president of human resources for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. "There is a perception out there that we're not as progressive as we are and that we don't have some of the amenities of other cities, but we are a wonderful city that has a lot to offer."

Shot through the eyes of "the young and restless" professional and creative class in Memphis, the video shows Memphis as a city on the move, overflowing with opportunities and fun.

The film showcases everything from the city's booming Downtown to its parks and sports. It pays homage to the city's musical heritage while tipping its hat to today's artists. The city's art, food and small-town atmosphere all have supporting roles.

"That is what we are, different from other places," said John Moore, president and CEO of the Memphis Regional Chamber. "We manufacture cool here."

"We have a lifestyle that is unique and authentic," he said. "San Francisco, Boston and New York can claim their uniqueness, and we are just as unique and authentic in what we can offer."

Since he took over the top job at the Chamber last year, Moore has been searching for marketing material the Chamber could use to recruit highly coveted 25- to 34-year-old professionals.

A recent study by CEOs for Cities found that the cities that have booming economies -- cities such as Charlotte, Atlanta, Austin and

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Portland -- have attracted five times more of these workers than the national average.

"The reason you focus on them is because you see the labor shortages coming and you know you have to build your talent pool, and you have to build your talent pool with people that are mobile," said Carol Coletta, host of the syndicated radio program "Smart City." "If you want to build your talent pool, you must build it when people are young and mobile."

Coletta said that as a recruiting tool, the video is "a giant leap in the right direction."

After sitting on the shelf for the past few years, Reyes' film, which is actually three different videos rolled into one, was just what the Chamber was looking for.

Reyes focused on young professionals who moved to Memphis from other locations and Memphians who left only to return later on.

People like Derrick Choo, a 38-year-old architect at Askew Nixon Ferguson Architects who moved to Memphis from Malaysia in 1985.

"Memphis is a city that is definitely going somewhere," said Choo, who appears in the video. "It has really picked up steam over the last five years and is a city that is on the move."

Carissa Hussong, the executive director of the UrbanArt Commission who called Seattle home before she moved to Memphis, said the video does a masterful job of promoting the hip, active lifestyle Memphis offers instead of settling for old reliables like Elvis and barbecue.

"That's not everything, it's a very limited part of who we are," said Hussong, who appears in the video with her husband, David Lusk. "I don't think those things are bad. It's just that there is so much more to promote, and Chris does that."

-- Amos Maki: 529-2351

## MY MEMPHIS

A film by Memphis artist Christopher Reyes that will be used as a talent recruiting tool will be unveiled next week.

**Where:** Malco Cinema Paradiso

**When:** Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.

**Who:** Local filmmaker Craig Brewer will introduce the film.

**Web sites:** [mymemphis.tv](http://mymemphis.tv) and [livefrommemphis.com](http://livefrommemphis.com)

For more information, call 543-3554.

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