

Flabby Firm

"Oh," said my friend. "Flabby – they do music multimedia, but they're good." For Alex Boyesen, the Moto-Guzzi-riding chairman of Flabberghasted, a twelve-strong company based in Spitalfields, London, flab is something to be proud of. In its two-and-a-bit years of existence, his outfit has achieved international recognition, working on everything from the music for Microsoft *Encarta* and developing Apple's Pippin set-top box to that notorious UK vapourware, *Virtual Nightclub*.

Alex and Technical Manager Brett Nagy started Flabby (www.flabberghasted.co.uk) with a sound booth Alex brought with him from his old job creating music and sound effects for Dorling Kindersley's interactive division. Alex and Brett rebuilt the booth in Flabby's original basement studio, where Andy Metcalfe is currently noodling around on a PC, creating interactive music for Riff, an interactive site on MSN's Entertainment Channel (onstage.msn.com). Metcalfe is using music he co-wrote with former bandmate Robyn Hitchcock, and adapting Microsoft's interactive music architecture to specify chord patterns and possible routes from one to another.



Flabberghasted's Alex Boyesen and Brett Nagy know flab is a new-media issue.

The music that Flabberghasted has created for Riff has a massive number of combinations of "personalities" and instruments – around 24 factorial. And the graphics, animated .gifs strung together by Creative Director Phil Booth, are a far cry from the usual: see-through 2D double-decker buses sprouting tomato plants; a set of nesting, dancing cones; a ringing gourd that explodes at the end of the clip. Says Alex, "Riff is where interactive music on the Net comes of age."

Flabberghasted now occupies three floors of a building in Spitalfields Market, including three basement digital studios. This degree of self-containment is a new experience for the firm, which used to be split among various sites in the market, including one office built directly atop a medieval plague pit. With innumerable other projects in the pipeline, flabbi-ness has never been so attractive. – *Liz Bailey*

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