

Félix & Paul Studios

Company Showcase

- **Type of company:** Immersive entertainment studio
- **Established:** 2014
- **Location(s):** Montréal, QC and Santa Monica, CA
- **Company Size:** 65 Employees
- **Website:** <https://www.felixandpaul.com>

Félix and Paul Studios, a studio producing high quality immersive entertainment experiences, started five years ago with founders Félix Lajeunesse and Paul Raphaël, two directors with previous experience in commercial, music video and documentary. Unlike the vast majority of VR studios, Félix and Paul Studios has created a full stack of tools that allows it to work entirely internally. It develops and uses its own camera system, its own workflow and post-production ecosystem and uses its own video player and apps.

Company Origins

Before starting their company, founders Lajeunesse and Raphaël became interested in immersive entertainment, at that time 3D cinema and holography, and developed large scale installations where they would create the illusion of a portal to another world, such as their work for the Canada Pavilion at the World Exposition Shanghai in 2010. They were finally introduced to VR with the Developer Kit they ordered from Oculus Rift Kickstarter campaign. Seeing the potential of this technology, they immediately started working on a proprietary camera system to capture 360-degree video content for display on the Oculus Rift.

At SXSW in 2014, they got in touch with Oculus, and showed them their project Strangers with Patrick Watson, which left them very impressed, so much so that this video made it to the early Oculus demo reel, prior even to Facebook's acquisition of Oculus. Since then, Félix & Paul Studios has done more work with Oculus than any other studio. Today, Félix and Paul Studios has grown into an industry leader, working with Google, Cirque du Soleil, Fox and Universal Studios and securing \$6.8 million in its Series A funding round in 2016.

Today, Félix & Paul counts 65 employees spread across its two offices in Montréal and Santa Monica, CA, the latter created when Ryan Horrigan, Chief Content Officer, joined the company. It is a strength to be a Canadian company, not only to be able to rely on the significant talent pool in the Montréal area, but also to make the most of film, TV and digital media incentives and tax credits.

VR Explorers

Launched by CFC Media Lab with founding partner OMERS Ventures in collaboration with Nordicity, *Pulse on VR: A Living Ecosystem* presents an ongoing snapshot of the Canadian Virtual Reality (VR) ecosystem as it evolves. *Pulse on VR: A Living Ecosystem* is generously supported by the Ontario Media Development Corporation (OMDC), the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, On-Screen Manitoba (OSM), New Media Manitoba (NMM), Creative BC, Canada Media Fund (CMF-FMC), Telefilm Canada, SODEC and Super Ventures.

CFC Media Lab
OMERS Ventures
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For more information
please go to PulseOnVR.ca

Over the past five years, the studio explored different genres with a guiding principle of excellence and high visual fidelity. With projects like the Nomads series, the studio delved into the nonfiction space. In collaboration with Cirque du Soleil, it developed several immersive experiences offering a never before seen perspective on these fascinating shows. With Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, it produced social impact pieces leveraging the potential of VR to shed a light on social change in Kenya or to raise awareness on global warming. But the team at Félix and Paul Studios probably learned more about storytelling, acting and image composition in VR with Miyubi, a 40-minute scripted comedy presented at Sundance last year. Other recent projects include The Confessional, short comedic episodes produced with Google, and Space Explorers, an ambitious 2-year project developed in partnership with NASA and Space X, pinnacle of Félix and Paul's innovative work.

Competitive Advantage

The studio wants to ensure that the technology always serves its creative ambition. With every project comes an opportunity to improve its proprietary camera system (e.g. a slow motion underwater camera for Cirque du Soleil's O), its workflow, or more broadly its understanding of immersive content. As it has been developing its own tools, the studio has been able to keep a tight system of technology and creativity in a way that no other VR studio has: this is a reason of Félix and Paul's success. This has allowed the company to gain efficiencies and keep the costs down. With what is said to be the best live action 3D 360 camera system today, Félix and Paul Studios rapidly stood out from competition and attracted talents, IP holders and collaborators.

Félix and Paul Studios works closely with hardware manufacturers, primarily Oculus and Google and increasingly with HTC and PlayStation. Partnering with hardware makers allows the studio to develop its own solutions (from cameras to player apps) and to get feedback from manufacturers, both on the technology and content side. Virtual Reality is a collaborative space, and the fact that it is still early days pushes people to get together to figure out what the future of immersive entertainment will be. For this reason, half of the 30 projects in development at Félix and Paul involve outside individual talent, artists and experts.

Challenges

Ryan Horrigan acknowledges that penetration rate and headset growth has been a challenge. Some market studies show that there are perhaps between 10 and 15 million VR headsets on the market. Ryan estimates that for VR entertainment content to be really viable they need the market to grow two to three times its current size, namely 25 to 40 million headsets in Europe and North America. A lot of that will be determined by the success of products like the Oculus Go and other untethered standalone headsets. If some people in the industry show pessimism for the at-home market, there is more optimism for the VR arcades and cinemas. However, none of the players in that space is making a fortune and none of them has actually expanded to the number of cities they really want to be in yet.

Looking ahead

Félix and Paul Studios remains confident in the future of VR. The VR industry has a chance to be as big as the console gaming market. Ryan already pictures VR being part of a global system, with AR glasses (with VR functionality) syncing with the phone in your pocket. Things will change quickly with 5G networks and the major achievements in cloud computing.

For the company, the future is already here. Félix and Paul Studios started as a cinematic VR company but as it is evolving, expanding, and diversifying its interests, the studio is becoming an immersive entertainment company. Félix and Paul projects now encompass VR, AR and mixed reality – with projects being made for Magic Leap glasses – but also immersive theatres. The studio also has a strong interest in innovations like 360-projection domes (e.g. Paul Allen’s Holodome), or like the Madison Square Garden ambitious MSG Sphere, a 18,000-seat venue for concert and immersive entertainment set to open in 2020 in Las Vegas.