

Stept Studios Delivers High-Impact Marvel x ESPN Commercial in Record Time

*NFL Draft Spot Featuring David Harbour and George Kittle Debuts Ahead of Marvel's Thunderbolts**

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, May 5, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Stept Studios](https://www.einpresswire.com/stept-studios) is proud to announce the release of a new commercial for Marvel's Thunderbolts*, which premiered this past weekend during the NFL Draft — one of the most-watched events in recent history.

The spot, produced by Stept Studios for ESPN and Marvel Studios, was directed by Varsity, the directing duo of John Marsico and Ben McManus, and features Thunderbolts* star David Harbour alongside NFL star George Kittle.



Stept Studios' Director Duo, Varsity

With only eight days of prep and a very tight amount of shoot time with the lead talent, Varsity approached the production with precision, adaptability, and signature comedic craftsmanship. "This was filmmaking at its most intense and most rewarding," said Varsity. "It took quick creative thinking, tight collaboration, and a veteran crew to execute a fast-paced concept at a cinematic level under extreme constraints."

The challenge: direct a talent-driven, comedic performance piece with shifting scripts and schedules — and a tight shoot window with Harbour. Varsity responded with what they call their "heist mentality," turning chaos into cohesion.

They created a vacuum-sealed performance space that shielded Harbour from the logistical frenzy, allowing for focused direction, nuanced performances, and true comedic beats. The approach also extended to working with George Kittle, whose charisma was captured thanks to a relaxed, collaborative environment that Stept and Varsity cultivated on set.

"As comedy directors, we have to build space for discovery," added Varsity. "We always shoot

three versions: the script as-is, a more elevated take, and a wild version where we can experiment. That malleability gives us creative flexibility in post — and often, the magic lives in those looser takes.” [Lockt](#)'s Patrick O'Leary edited the spot.

“Getting to work with in character actors always elevates our creative,” said Jamie Overkamp ESPN Senior Creative Director. And David Harbour as Red Guardian and George Kittle are a dream pairing when it comes to comedy. And we caught lightning in a bottle, with this draft being the second most watched NFL draft ever.

This was a tremendous opportunity to capitalize on. We wanted to integrate the Red Guardian from Thunderbolts in a way that you could imagine his character talking and thinking about the NFL Draft. Having an in-character moment that was also contextual has been something that we have been hoping to do with ESPN for a long time and we finally found the perfect tie-in. It is exciting to work on Marvel Studios projects and doing this in collaboration with ESPN and David Harbour was a marketing dream come true. I'm really proud of this team!" - Evelyn Livermore, VP Integrated Marketing & Synergy Walt Disney Studios.

The resulting spot is a sharp, and hilarious — a fitting lead-in for Marvel's Thunderbolts*, which hits theaters May 2, 2025.

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