Autodesk Launches Toxik: New Creative and Collaborative Software for Feature Film Visual Effects

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Groundbreaking Solution for Multi-Artist Film Studio and Post-Production

Pipelines

SAN RAFAEL, Calif., March 31 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Autodesk(R) Inc. (Nasdaq: ADSK) today announced Autodesk Toxik(TM), collaborative compositing software for the creation of digital visual effects. Featuring advanced creative tools as well as integrated, enterprise-level collaboration, Toxik brings new capabilities to feature film production -- a market that is demanding increasingly sophisticated levels of creativity, collaboration and image processing quality. Redefining the way visual effects are created, managed and shared, Toxik will be shown publicly at the National Association of Broadcasters' Convention (NAB) in Las Vegas, April 18-21, 2005.

(Logo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20050331/SFTH039LOGO-a)

(Photo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20050331/SFTH039-b)

"Sophisticated film pipelines are the technological backbone through which filmmakers can realize their most creative and complex ideas," said Carl Bass, COO of Autodesk. "With Toxik, Autodesk is charting a new course for the creativity behind film visual effects, and is designing a new way for digital artists to work together on film post-production."

In essence, a visual effects film pipeline is a finely tuned assembly line in which teams of specialized artists create individual elements that are amassed into the final scene. Toxik's collaborative engine offers a way to manage this complexity and automate time-consuming data management tasks to quickly deliver superior digital imagery.

Martin Vann, vice president of Autodesk's Media and Entertainment Division, said, "Our goal is to enable filmmakers to turn their most creative ideas into reality. For this reason, we've developed Toxik from the ground up, with extensive input from industry leaders around the world. The growing complexity of filmmaking clearly indicates the need for an integrated, procedural, multi-user compositing technology that complements our single-user, Academy Award(R)-winning visual effects systems like Discreet(R) Inferno(R) and Discreet Flame(R). Toxik fulfills this need."

Toxik software has been shaped by feedback from 28 beta sites, including: Weta Digital (New Zealand) -- best known for its Academy Award(R)-winning visual effects work on the Lord of the Rings trilogy, Condor (Amsterdam), Moving Picture Company (UK), Lumiq Studios (Italy), Eclair Laboratoires (France), Imagica Corp. (Japan) and Asylum (USA). Toxik is ideal for film studios and post-production facilities that require an efficient production pipeline in which multiple compositors work together on projects that call for high-resolution, high bit-depth and procedural advanced compositing capabilities.

Matteo Eleni, Inferno artist at Lumiq Studios, said, "With Toxik, Autodesk has once again put together the useful and the creative; the result is collaboration. Collaboration is at the very heart of creativity."

Dr. Jon Peddie, principal analyst at Jon Peddie Research (Tiburon, CA) -- the leading multimedia market research firm, said, "The demands for increased complexity and creativity have fueled a shift in the last 30 years from physical 'in-camera' visual effects to post-production based digital effects. For example, the original 1977 Star Wars had only one-fifth the technical credits compared to last year's blockbuster Spider-Man 2. Autodesk Toxik software is pioneering technology that tackles the new realities for filmmaking head on by providing a creative toolset in a no-compromise software architecture."

Jeroen Schulte, head of 2D systems at Condor (Amsterdam), said, "Advanced systems such as Flame have always provided a powerful core to our business. They're tuned systems that let us work interactively with clients to produce stellar imagery. Toxik solves some of the new challenges we've been facing at Condor, like having the flexibility to deal with large scale projects for which the facility processes mass amounts of content in a short period of time. Autodesk is unique in being able to provide both the 'hero seat' and the multiple-user compositing software necessary for our business to grow."

Since Toxik is a software-based product, it can be rapidly deployed on a number of standard PCs to augment interactive systems. Toxik's centralized project management enables users to be immediately productive, eliminating the delays associated with sequential compositing.

Phil Brennam, Asylum's lead compositing artist, said, "Toxik is the most innovative new compositing product to hit the market in many years. Toxik's project structure allows the artist to remain focused on the creative while the database tracks your every change." Tommy Hooper, director of technology at Asylum, elaborated, "Until Toxik, no compositing software had addressed the problems of versioning -- the tracking of dependencies between multiple elements that change over time. This used to be such a time consuming, error-prone process, but Toxik's powerful embedded database takes care of that, so projects get done faster. With its extensive Python-based scripting, we can easily integrate Toxik into our pipeline, functioning as a powerful, distributed software pipeline."

Designed with a creative user in mind, Toxik's image processing capabilities are built around its Ultra-High Resolution Interaction and High Dynamic Range Imagery (HDRI) core, allowing users to work interactively and intuitively with virtually any visual media, regardless of bit-depth or image size. Toxik also features: Reaction, Autodesk's next-generation 3D environment for interactive compositing; Suave, a high-quality software renderer; and an entirely new user interface (UI) paradigm called "Touch UI." The advanced, patent-pending components of the Touch UI's gestural interface keep the artist's focus on the creative task at hand by providing creative tools and options in context, and optimizing flow through the various UI elements. The Touch UI scales to even the highest-resolution modern displays.

Key Features in Toxik

-- Creative tools: Advanced compositing toolset for visual effects creation, including tracking, keying, HDRI and standard color correction and

rotoscoping tools

-- Enterprise collaboration: Simultaneous multi-user access to centralized media and meta-data; composition versioning

-- Ultra High-Resolution Interaction: Fast display and fluid manipulation of extremely large images (4K, 8K, even 21K+)

-- Reaction: Autodesk's next-generation 3D compositing environment

-- Suave: Reaction's 32-bit float, high-quality, HDR-capable software renderer

-- Touch UI: A unique gestural user interface for fast on-screen compositing interaction

-- Highly-optimized, 32-bit float and 16-bit half-float HDR processing pipeline

-- Efficient, node-based procedural compositing system with advanced animation capabilities

-- Flexible, modular software architecture, comprehensive API and full Python scripting capabilities for superior facility integration, process automation and workflow customization

Configuration, Pricing and Availability

Toxik is designed to extract the maximum performance from Intel(R)-based workstations and the NVIDIA(R) Quadro(R) FX series of graphics cards for Windows-based operating systems. North American pricing for one Toxik creative seat with supporting collaboration infrastructure is $9,000 USD. Toxik 1.0 begins shipping worldwide in mid-April 2005 (at NAB). For further information visit www.discreet.com/products.

About Autodesk

Autodesk, Inc. is wholly focused on ensuring that great ideas are turned into reality. With six million users, Autodesk is the world's leading software and services company for the building, manufacturing, infrastructure, digital media, and wireless data services fields. Autodesk's solutions help customers create, manage, and share their data and digital assets more effectively. As a result, customers turn ideas into competitive advantage by becoming more productive, streamlining project efficiency, and maximizing profits.

Founded in 1982, Autodesk is headquartered in San Rafael, California. For additional information about Autodesk, please visit www.autodesk.com.

* In 1998, Gary Tregaskis, Dominique Boisvert, Philippe Panzini and Andre Leblanc were awarded the Scientific and Engineering Award from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for the design, development and implementation of Autodesk's Discreet Inferno and Discreet Flame software.

Contact: Roohi Saeed, 514-954-7296

Email: roohi.saeed@autodesk.com

SOURCE Autodesk, Inc.
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CONTACT: Roohi Saeed of Autodesk, Inc., +1-514-954-7296, or roohi.saeed@autodesk.com
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