



Autodesk Maya and Autodesk 3ds Max: 3D Tools of Choice for World Trade Center, Everyone's Hero and Other Blockbuster Films

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SAN RAFAEL, Calif., Sept. 26 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Autodesk, Inc.'s (Nasdaq: ADSK) Autodesk 3ds Max and Autodesk Maya 3D animation, modeling and rendering software were used extensively on this season's line-up of blockbuster films. Using 3ds Max and Maya, digital artists created sophisticated 3D content for the live-action films Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby and World Trade Center, and also shaped the fully computer-generated (CG) movies Everyone's Hero and The Ant Bully.

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20050415/SFF034LOGO>)

"Over the past two years we have seen a sharp increase in the number of entirely computer-generated movies, as well as the amount of CG content in live-action films," said Marc Petit, Autodesk's Media & Entertainment vice president. "There are more 3D visual effects than ever before in film, CG characters are increasingly popular in both live-action and CG movies, and the demand for photo-realism is rising. The creation of true-to-life digital components, such as CG race cars in Talladega Nights and a CG Manhattan in World Trade Center, show the new heights that can be achieved when today's most talented artists use Autodesk Maya and 3ds Max."

Visual effects facility Double Negative used Maya software for its work on World Trade Center, the epic story of two port authority police officers trapped in the rubble of New York's Twin Towers. Maya was used to digitally model lower Manhattan, as well as to create all of the film's smoke simulations. Knowing that some fluid simulations can take up to a week to create at high resolution, such as those needed for smoke effects, Double Negative prepared by adding to its already formidable smoke library. This library included everything from the small smoky geysers on ground zero to the massive plumes of smoke that would pour out of the burning towers.

"Autodesk Maya, in combination with our proprietary voxel renderer dnb, allowed us to achieve the high level of realism this film deserved. From the outset of the project, I felt that the smoke was going to be the biggest challenge that I've personally faced in computer graphics," noted Ryan Cook, one of the CG supervisors on World Trade Center. "The sensitive nature of the subject, combined with the fact the world has seen images of this tragedy, meant that anything less than a photo-realistic re-creation of the tragedy would be unacceptable."

3ds Max software was used by Digital Dimension to create CG race cars and set extensions for Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby. "In some of the shots our digital cars were hero elements in the frame, so they had to appear photo-real up close, alongside live-action race cars," said Andy Roberts, lead CG artist at Digital Dimension. "Autodesk 3ds Max render elements, advanced extensions and the open nature of the software allowed us to achieve this." The 3ds Max xref system also enabled Digital Dimension's artists to make geometry and texture adjustments to CG race cars, stadiums and racetracks, and have these revisions automatically ripple across all the relevant shots downstream in the visual effects pipeline, producing countless time savings.

"On occasion, when we needed to step outside of Autodesk 3ds Max, such as for crowd creation or fluid dynamics, the software's robust import/export ability allowed us to exchange data efficiently and without fuss," added Roberts. "This pragmatic approach to the realities of a visual effects pipeline, where multiple tools are often employed, was very refreshing."

Maya software was also used by Los Angeles-based Starz Animation to create the entirely computer-generated film, Everyone's Hero. Approximately 150 artists worked to complete roughly 1450 shots for the film, which included more than 250 characters, over 130 sets and sub-sets and more than 500 props. Maya helped the facility to manage assets and scene complexity, to effectively integrate crowds into final rendered scenes and to find a balance between rendering speeds and image quality.

"Autodesk Maya was integral to our pipeline for Everyone's Hero," explained Jeff Bell, VP of technology and CG supervisor at Starz Animation. "We used it in all stages of production, from rough layouts done on the front lines, to the lighting interfaces, to the very back end where we employed it with standalone operation of mental ray rendering software. The openness of Maya allowed us to easily integrate the software with our own toolsets and interface with our asset and production management systems, resulting in greater operational efficiencies and allowing our teams to make the most of the creative tools available."

Another all-CG film created with Autodesk's 3D software is Warner Brother's The Ant Bully. Over 250 artists at Las Vegas-based DNA worked on the film over a period of three years and delivered more than 1,500 shots. Autodesk Maya software was used for character animation, modeling, rigging, cloth and hair.

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