Autodesk Technology Heats Up the Big Screen with Action, Adventure and Animation

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Summer Blockbuster Films Shaped using Autodesk's Entertainment Software

SAN RAFAEL, Calif., Aug 14, 2007 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX News Network/ -- Digital artists around the world relied on Autodesk, Inc.'s (Nasdaq: ADSK) media and entertainment solutions to deliver this summer's blockbuster entertainment. Transformers, Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer, Surf's Up, Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End, Penelope and countless other feature films have been created using Autodesk technology.

"Autodesk software offers creative solutions that help artists raise the bar, push boundaries and deliver visual masterpieces that make for a truly authentic movie experience each and every time," said Marc Petit, Autodesk Media & Entertainment senior vice president. "This summer's blockbusters offer something for everyone, including surfing penguins, hammering llamas and transforming superheroes. We continue to support and applaud those artists who create magical images, transporting audiences to exhilarating new heights."

Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) and his posse returned in the long-anticipated trilogy, Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End. Post-production facility Asylum completed 315 shots with a visual effects pipeline that included the Autodesk Flame and Autodesk Toxik visual effects solutions, Autodesk Maya 3D animation software, and Autodesk Lustre digital color grading system.

In one scene shaped by Asylum using Flame, Sparrow is exiled to a desert purgatory where he begins to hallucinate and sees 20 clones of himself dressed as his crew. The Flame system was also used to create the climactic maelstrom backdrop along with computer-generated characters, mast extensions on miniature ships and track shots. Toxik was used for compositing, color correction, and final tweaks.

Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) was the main visual effects house for Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End. ILM used Maya and Flame as part of its proprietary SABRE visual effects system to create computer-generated characters and Maelstrom sequence.

Michael Bay's summer powerhouse Transformers exploded onto the big screen as evil Decepticons re-wage war on heroic Autobots. ILM used Maya and Inferno as part of its proprietary SABRE visual effects system to complete 460 shots for the film. Maya was used for all character animation, including the challenging opening sequence in which a robot attacks an American military base in the Middle East.

Autodesk Inferno was used on two key compositing sequences, including the Bonecrusher scene where a destructive 30-foot rollerblading robot shreds through a moving bus. The robot's bones were created using Maya and imported into Inferno, and were animated and combined with flying and burning debris.

Mark Casey, ILM's SABRE/Inferno artist, explained: "Creating and combining production plates, particle elements, computer-generated elements, practical pyrotechnics, and lens flares all in one shot can prove challenging and intimidating; knowing that all these elements can be tamed in Inferno is all the reassurance any artist needs."

Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer soared on the big screen, showcasing a battle between the powerful Silver Surfer and the planet-eating Galactus. The Orphanage completed approximately 120 shots on the film, with the majority of shots involving Maya 3D animation software.

"Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer presented us with an ever-changing array of challenges, from superpowers to surfboards. Maya was there for us at every step, allowing us to develop complex new effects easily and quickly," explained Stu Maschwitz, VFX supervisor at The Orphanage.

Up-and-comer surfer extraordinaire, Cody Maverick (Shia Labeouf), takes audiences on an animated journey in Surf's Up, from Sony Pictures Imageworks. The wizards at Sony Pictures Imageworks used Autodesk Lustre color grading system for the film's final grade. Also, a combination of software was used to create the final water animation, with much of it completed using Maya. "Maya is the core of the front-end pipeline at Imageworks," explains Mike Ford, character set-up supervisor. "It is used for modeling, layout, animation, and some effects work."

By leveraging the power of Maya Embedded Language (MEL) Python and Maya's API scripting, the Sony Pictures Imageworks team customized the Maya software to overcome many of the film's challenges. Comments David Schaub, animation director at Sony Pictures Imageworks, "We never have the question, 'Well, can the software do that?' Because if it doesn't, the way Maya is built allows us to create a tool that will do the job."

Modern-day fable Penelope is the story of pig-nosed Penelope Wilhern (Christina Ricci) and her family's secret curse. Double Negative turned to Maya to create the complicated computer-generated tree that helps tell the tale in the film's opening. The complex construction of the growing tree involved building the basic tree shape, including the trunk and main branch structure, using blend shapes to go from one small shape to one big shape, and using a combination of plug-ins to populate the smaller branches and leaves.

The Reaping, Are we Done Yet?, I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry, and Hairspray were films completed with EFILM using the EWORKS color grading system to complete the digital intermediate. The EWORKS system consists of a proprietary configuration of Autodesk Lustre and Autodesk Incinerator technology.

Other summer films created using Autodesk solutions include:

- Evan Almighty: Rhythm + Hues used Autodesk Maya to create computer-generated characters and CafeFX used Maya to model and animate sixty CG salt-water tropical fish
- 28 Weeks Later: Prime Focus London used Autodesk Flame, Inferno and Smoke to create all of the film's photorealistic 3D shots, including the napalm bombing sequence of London's Canary Wharf
- Live Free or Die Hard: Digital Dimension completed 182 shots using Autodesk 3ds Max to create 3D cars, 3D buildings, 3D crowds, 3D smoke and matte painting

About Autodesk

Autodesk, Inc. is the world leader in 2D and 3D design software for the manufacturing, building and construction, and media and entertainment markets. Since its introduction of AutoCAD software in 1982, Autodesk has developed the broadest portfolio of state-of-the-art digital prototyping solutions to help customers experience their ideas before they are real. Fortune 1000 companies rely on Autodesk for the tools to visualize, simulate and analyze real-world performance early in the design process to save time and money, enhance quality and foster innovation. For additional information about Autodesk, visit http://www.autodesk.com.

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