

Visual Effects
Specialization Project:
Post Mortem

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VISUAL EFFECTS

POST MORTEM

Abstract

This document is a post mortem on the project titled above.

Public

This is a Public document available to whoever is interested.

Version history

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1 GOALS

1.1 PROJECT GOALS

In this project the goals was to deliver a short film, about 10-20 seconds long. The film should include following:

- Filmed background material
- Fluid effects
- Particle effects
- 3D replacements

I choose these goals to achieve increased knowledge in visual effects, especially in fluid and particle effects. And gain experience in working with effects and compositing for film.

1.2 STRATEGY

I came up with a strategy to follow for my project to achieve my goals. The following quotation comes from my ProjectPlan_v1.3.doc under 2.3 STRATEGY on page 5(20):

“I will film my own background material, create my own effects and work with compositing to create my short film. I will look for references and study on fluid and particle effects by looking at tutorials, reading books and learning by doing. This will hopefully give me the knowledge and experience I’m after to achieve my goals.”

2 RESULT

I have created a short film, about 30 seconds long, where a tornado is making its way through the little city Skellefteå. I filmed my own background material from the top of Vitberget down over the city and then I created the effects in Autodesk Maya 2008 and Fusion 5.3 to add on top of it to get the result I was after. I have also added sounds to the short film in Adobe Premiere Pro CS3.

2.1 DID I ACHIEVE MY GOALS?

According to my goals I was supposed to create a short film about 10-20 seconds long. I was writing my goals before I filmed my background material and after that was done I felt that I wanted to use the whole sequence and expanded the short film to about 30 seconds (whit out after texts).

I worked on fluids effects in Autodesk Maya 2008 and particle effects both in Autodesk Maya 2008 and in Fusion 5.3.

I also added small cars for 3D replacements, created in Autodesk Maya 2008.

I feel that I have achieved my goals in this project. I've worked with fluid effects and particle effects and to create the visual effects for my filmed material I worked a lot with compositing.

I followed my strategy even though it has been a lot more learning by doing then time spent on watching tutorials and reading books.



3 EVALUATION

3.1 MS1 – STUDYING INFORMATION

This was the stage where we should search for information and define our Specialization Project.

It took some time before I decided what to do in my Specialization Project, mostly because I did not know where to start. When I came up with the idea of a tornado that worked its way through the small city Skellefteå I started to look for more information about visual effects and which area I wanted to work more on. I found myself looking at examples of particle and fluid effects and I decided that I wanted to increase my knowledge in that area.

3.2 MS2 – TESTING AND PREPARING

During this period I studied tutorials and run some tests to find out how I was supposed to set my work up in the production phase.

I felt that I did not have enough time for testing in this stage and that I should have started testing earlier. A lot of the tests done in this project were done in the production phase which made me work late and more than I would have done if I had planned my time better from the beginning.

3.3 MS3 – PRODUCTION PHASE

I had a hard time to get my production phase going, it felt like I had taken on too much and I did not know where to start, but when I finally created a time schedule for the production phase it got a lot easier. I fell behind in my time schedule right from the beginning because I went sick for a week, something that I had not planned for, but I worked my way up again and ended up almost exactly where I should have been according to the schedule when it was one week left.

I had to do a lot of testing during this stage that I should have done earlier to save time. There was a lot more work than I had expected and I needed to create a lot more layers to get a good result. It was not that easy to plan because I haven't

worked with fluid effects before but the time I lost testing during the fluids part I gained during the part where I worked on particles where I had some earlier experience.

When I started working on 3D replacements I realised that I did not have enough time to create trees that would stand closer to the camera and the other things that the tornado dragged up from the ground was so small because of the distance that I could have used particles for them all. But I wanted to use some models to learn more on replacing objects in filmed material and when I found out that the objects the tornado dragged up was so small I thought I could use rigid bodies to get a good result. So when I had done some small models of cars I made them into rigid bodies and used fields to animate them. I found this both a challenge and something to my advantage where I could use the same setup as I used for my particles around the tornado as a foundation.

In the end there were long days and late nights at the computer to finish the project. I still wanted to get some things from my wish list in to my short film so I worked over more than I thought I would. I had some small problems during this phase when it came to the software but fortunately it did not occur very often. For example, I could not save my scene in Autodesk Maya 2008 once because the program could not find the moving tool.

I'm happy with the results and feel that it was worth it, even though I was frustrated at times when things did not work properly.

4 WHAT HAVE I LEARNT?

I've learned that it's not that easy to plan a project in a subject you have very little knowledge in from the beginning. It could be difficult to find the right information that was needed and things would take either longer or shorter time than planned.

I've learned to not give up when it feels hopeless. Most of those times when you have become hypnotized by a problem all that is needed are a small brake and then you will see the problems with new eyes.

4.1 WHAT COULD I HAVE DONE DIFFERENT

If I could go back and do something different I would probably do the following:

- Search for more information in an earlier stage.
- Prepare more when it comes to the time of the project.
- Start testing as soon as the project was defined.