

SIGGRAPH 2000 pointed at 3D web animation and tools. Now, many applications are enhanced for the new challenge – 3D on the web. This is a brief look at some new products and services.

ALIAS wavefront released its new version 3 of MAYA. Visual effects artists, 3D animators and on-line editors creating digital content for film, television and multi-media productions can benefit from new features and enhancements added to Fusion's multi-threaded architecture. Integrated paint capabilities, productive workflow, 3D text tool, plus further compatibility are part of the new release, which will be available in November 2000. With Maya Fusion 3's new features and enhancements, artists will be able to tackle complex projects. The task of creating seamless composites of CG with live action and visual effects production are more attainable than ever before. For example, non-destructive animateable paintbrush strokes, which drastically reduce the need to jump back and forth between different applications, are available with seamlessly integrated paint capabilities. The Flow Layout system, with grouping capabilities, offers a simplified way to manage complex combinations of tools and data. With the new Text tool true 3D text capabilities with unique per character styling are feasible. Additionally, productivity is enhanced with new pre-caching technology, which facilitates task-based workflow within Fusion's existing procedural metaphor. As announced at WWDC in June, there will be a version for Macintosh users in the very near future. A beta version will be available in October this year. The final release will come out in early 2001.

Pepper's Ghost Productions launched its production management system, PG Studio, which provides effective team-working methods and puts producers in control of the creative process. It is designed to be simple and flexible. With the advent of larger, more ambitious projects in the 3D-animation world, PG Studio's format is appropriate for an individual, a studio or a company and covers each aspect of project management and control. As a market place for 3D animators, 3D content creators, and their created all-digital models Turbo Squid provides distribution services (software can be downloaded from the web). They give access to millions of assets that have been created by these artists around the world. Turbo Squid promote the work of artist to a worldwide audience, manage the business, process financial transactions and pay out as the asset sells.

Discreet showed combustion, a product that is entering the NT and Mac market and offering the same features to both platforms. Combustion provides an effective colour correction as known from Adobe Photoshop with all its features implemented in it. Combustion provides abilities to design, animate, composite, and render seamlessly in a unified non-destructive, paint and compositing environment to finish complex effects shots. It uses Discreet's "artist" interface and technology for motion tracking, keying, rotoscope and composite elements interactively-all within a true 3D compositing environment. The advanced architecture of combustion integrates image caching, multi-processor support and multiple scene views, to deliver a new standard of visual interactivity on the desktop. Compose within a resolution independent workspace using uncompressed video and experience performance that blows away the competition. Discreet announced to bring 3D content to the Internet through expansion of its 3d studio max animation platform. A subset of discreet's 3d studio max authoring tool is planned to be released to game players for no charge on the web.

The new Origin 3000 series from SGI brings flexibility and resiliency to build a server system that matches growth plans and business requirements. The philosophy behind it is the NUMA architecture. It allows configuring and reconfiguring systems 'brick by brick'. Bricks are: router interconnect, CPU module, base I/O module, PCI expansion, XIO expansion, graphics expansion, and disk storage. The series provides peak bandwidth for high-speed connectivity, 100 Mbps FC, and SGI clustered filesystem (CXFS). The series scales from two to 512 MIPS processors.