DIMENSION

The Newsletter of the Los Angeles Chapter of ACM/SIGGRAPH   June 1998

Upcoming Meetings

◆ Tuesday, June 9, 1998
A Special Screening of *Godzilla*

◆ July/August Issue
98-99 Calendar of Events

◆ Call the SIGPHONE, 310-288-1148
For recorded information on the time and location of our next meeting.

Announcements

◆ Dimension Advertising Specs:

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◆ The ad submission deadline for July's issue is June 1st!

◆ Contact us!
SIGPHONE: 310-288-1148
SIGFAX: 310-578-7369
Los_Angeles_Chapter@siggraph.org
www.siggraph.org/chapters/los_angeles/

L.A. SIGGRAPH Chapter Meeting: Tuesday, June 9th
A SPECIAL SCREENING OF GODZILLA

The Program

6:30   Doors Open (Priority entry for members)
7:00   Introduction and Screening

The Location

The Writers Guild, 135 S. Doheny Drive
Beverly Hills, CA

Directions

From the 405 freeway exit Wilshire East; continue east on Wilshire to Doheny Drive. Turn right onto Doheny.

Parking

Parking is $1.75 at the parking lot next door to the Guild entrance. $7 in lot across the street.

Fees/Registration

This event is free to L.A. SIGGRAPH members and $5 for non-members. New members who sign up on-site and pay the $25 annual membership fee (checks or cash only) do not have to pay the $5 registration fee.

The Event

The June L.A. SIGGRAPH meeting will be a full screening of the Tristar Pictures production of Roland Emmerich's *Godzilla*. The screening, which will take place at the Writer's Guild in Beverly Hills, will be preceded by a brief introduction to the movie by Don Levy of Sony Picture Imageworks.

The Making of *GODZILLA*

Centropolis Entertainment is a multi-faceted entertainment organization that develops and produces a variety of ventures in all arenas, including film, television and interactive projects. Centropolis Entertainment features two sister companies, Centropolis Effects, L.L.C., and Centropolis Interactive, Inc. Centropolis Effects, L.L.C. applied some of its digital/compositing magic to *Godzilla*.

Godzilla, which Director Roland Emmerich co-wrote with his longtime writing partner and producer Dean Devlin, stars, among others, Matthew Broderick, Jean Reno, Hank Azaria and Maria Pitillo, is a Centropolis Entertainment production, released through TriStar Pictures Centropolis was the lead digital effects house on the film, contributing over 240 character animation shots to the film and over 160 digital composites. Based on a hybrid of SGI and Windows NT hardware, Centropolis has departments for character animation, 3D camera tracking, 3D computer graphics effects, 2D digital compositing, 35mm scanning and recording, and roto/paint. The company is equipped with Discreet Logic Infernos along with Cineon Tornadoes and Cineon Storms.

The bulk of Sony Pictures Imageworks' compliment of 119 shots involved the helicopter sequence in which *Godzilla* is chased at high speed through the streets of Manhattan culminating with the creature dodging missiles atop the landmark Chrysler Building and the final

L.A. SIGGRAPH
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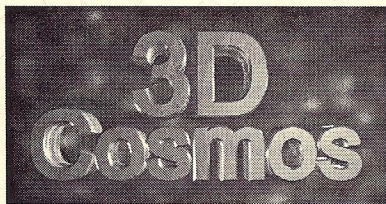
Congratulations to the 98/99 Officers!

SIGGRAPH-Tech-Request Mailing List

We have a new mailing list focusing on the technology of computer graphics. The list is intended for discussing shaders, software plug-ins, procedural modeling and animation, algorithms, and other graphics programming-related topics. The list may also be used to organize informal meetings to discuss technical issues in addition to the regular L.A. SIGGRAPH meetings.

To join the list, e-mail siggraph-tech-request@allen.com with the word "subscribe" in the body of the email, or visit our web page, http://www.siggraph.org/chapters/los_angeles/ for more information.

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chase sequence in which an angry *Godzilla* pursues a taxicab containing the film's heroes. Imageworks was also involved in the Baby *Godzilla* sequence inside Madison Square Garden.

"The challenge for us on *Godzilla*," says Digital Effects Supervisor Jerome Chen, "was to create exciting and detailed interaction between the creature and everything going on in the environment and to marry our look with the work of several different visual effects companies." The latter challenge was met, in part, by the open collaboration between Centropolis Visual Effects and Imageworks. In addition to daily meetings between Imageworks and Centropolis, three of Imageworks' Digital Character Animators actually moved into the Centropolis facility. Meanwhile, to insure a consistent look for the creature throughout the movie, Centropolis shared digital information with Imageworks and VisionArt Design and Animation. This was especially important when it came to rendering – the process in which the digital information from the artists is processed by powerful computers to produce the final image for a shot. The consistency of the procedural code combined with the talent of the digital artists helped to insure uniform look.

Most of Imageworks' 119 shots involved an intricate level of interaction between *Godzilla* and the other elements in the shot. For the most part, *Godzilla* was animated by artists at Centropolis. Then, wireframe models of the creature were delivered to Imageworks where artists and technical directors lit *Godzilla* and added a myriad of elements to each shot. For instance, in the climax sequence when *Godzilla* chases the taxicab down the street, Imageworks added motion blur, water and diffusion to the creature, put computer generated rain into the scene, added buckling and cracking pavement, digital debris and street lights, along with model cars and performed complex motion tracking to make sure that everything moved synchronously.

VisionArt Design & Animation is the visual effects component of the three subsidiaries which are housed under Santa Monica Studios. They were involved in 130 of the visual effects shots.

Josh Rose, executive vice president of Santa Monica Studios and head of VisionArt Design & Animation commented that "In *Godzilla*, some of the big effects animation shots or *Godzilla* aftermath shots, people will never realize they are effects shots. They consist of intense tracking shots, Appache helicopter shots, etc. Our 3-D proprietary camera tracking technique was used extensively including the *Godzilla* footprints and cargo shots, which were over 800 frames in length and had to be solidly tracked to their environment."

Rose continues on to explain, "For the baby 'zillas' sequence we did about 1/3 of the character animation, all the lighting, rendering and about half the compositing. *Godzilla* lays hundreds of babies emerge in Madison Square Garden. We developed artificial intelligent software so that we could animate multiple characters at a time. Each individual baby understood it?s environment and boundaries so that it would not walk through walls or another baby. It's similar to what we did for Independence Day in using the flocking technique to create the F-18's – only times 100. In all there were 885 babies animated primarily through our flocking technique with probably 120 of those key frame animation."

Special Thanks: Dennis Higgins, Don Levy, James Finch, Jane Lieberman, Rachel Aberly, Lisa DiSanto

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