

Post Asylum
www.postasylum.com

Customer Success Story

Autodesk® Smoke®

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—Graham Hagood,
Executive Producer,
Post Asylum

Post Asylum keeps its Pants on.

Dallas, Texas-based studio streamlines with Autodesk® Smoke® software.



Image courtesy of Post Asylum.

Project Summary

In a lot of ways, Post Asylum functions a lot like it sounds. The Dallas, Texas-based facility comprises three high-end creative post boutiques: PA Editorial, Pure Evil Music and Sound Design, and PA Motion Design/VFX, all award-winning and each dedicated to not only satisfying, but exceeding the needs and expectations of its clients. In the course of doing all that, of course, things can get kind of crazy.

With a client list that includes the likes of American Airlines, HP, Adams Golf, York Heating & Air Conditioning, and Papa John's Pizza, there is rarely a dull moment in any of the boutiques and seamless workflow is a must. As the company's work became increasingly popular, not only in Dallas but across the nation, Post Asylum was looking for the best way to streamline its creative toolset for visual effects, compositing, and finishing work, among other things.

The company already had a supremely talented and popular VFX, 3D animation, and motion design artist in Michael “Pants” Sands, an industry and military veteran, whose unusual nickname somehow derived from his family name combined with his two military tours in Iraq, where his pants undoubtedly got sandy. The company decided to build a powerful new suite with Pants’ particular talents, and Autodesk® Smoke® software, at its center.

The Challenge

“Pants is a visual effects artist, a 3D animator, and an editor, and he is well-known here in Dallas,” says Graham Hagood. “We wanted to build a high-end suite that would match the level of work we’ve become known for doing. Autodesk Smoke came out on the Mac, and we’d been watching it getting faster and more feature rich. Pretty soon, Autodesk Smoke was an obvious solution for us. Pants had been using a variety of software packages before, but Smoke provided a much more elegant way to provide him with more powerful tools in one package.”

Since Pants started using Smoke, Post Asylum has been more in demand than ever. In just a few short months, PA Motion Design/VFX has performed finish and VFX work on several national spots for CenturyLink, Papa John's, Hasbro, and more. Post Asylum's editors perform creative offline editorial in four Avid® Symphony suites, then export their work to Pants' Smoke in Advanced Authoring Format (AAF) for conforming and finishing. As a visual effects artist with editorial chops, Pants has also used Smoke to cut some 30 second spots down to 15 second versions when necessary.

Autodesk®

“We’re now finishing almost all of our broadcast work with Smoke,” says Pants. “And traditional finish is just part of what we can do. Since we got the Smoke suite up and running, it’s just been one project after another.”

The Result

One of those jobs was for toy and board game maker Hasbro, who came to Post Asylum through youth and family marketing agency UPROAR!. Hasbro and UPROAR! were looking to create both national and international spots for Rubik’s Race, a board game based on that old favorite, the Rubik’s Cube. While live action footage of kids playing the game had already been shot, UPROAR! tapped Post Asylum to design and create 3D animated elements that would surround the footage and mimic the movement of the multi-colored tiles featured in the game.

After receiving 3D models from PA’s in-house animation team, Pants seamlessly transferred them to Smoke using Autodesk® FBX® 3D data interchange technology.

“Being able to bring 3D objects into the true 3D space in Smoke was fantastic,” says Pants. “We can texture, light, add reflections, 3D shadows, ambient occlusion, and so much more in real time. We can import a single 3D object as reference, then use that object to create multiple versions, which saves a lot of rendering time. Smoke is also capable of handling polygon amounts that would choke other systems.”

“The Rubik’s Race spot is a perfect example of how valuable Smoke is for Post Asylum,” says Hagood. “Since Pants is a 3D animator as well as a finishing artist, we were able to use Smoke to maximize the

3D camera movement, and make revisions right there, in real time. It worked out perfectly for the client, because we were able to use Smoke not only as a finishing tool, but also as a true compositing box, a previsualization tool, and more.”

Looking forward

Although the busy new Smoke system has only been operating for a few months, Hagood and Pants are very optimistic about the future of Smoke at Post Asylum. Having recently reviewed the latest version of the software, Pants is particularly enthusiastic about the inclusion of ConnectFX node-based compositing environment:

“The integration of the ConnectFX into Smoke is amazing,” he says. “If I want to add motion blur to a picture-in-picture, for instance, I’d normally have to save the axis, go back into Action, load the axis back up, then render it out and put it back on my timeline. With ConnectFX, all the effects are right there. I don’t have to render and go back into Action. I can do it all in one. That saves a lot of time.”

For more information about Autodesk Smoke software, visit www.autodesk.com/smoke. For more information about Autodesk FBX 3D data interchange technology, visit www.autodesk.com/fbx.



Images courtesy of Post Asylum.



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Post Asylum