



Images courtesy of Impossible Pictures.

## Reaching the heights of broadcast design.

If broadcast design were an Olympic event, then winning a BDA award would be like getting the gold. Every year, the Broadcast Designers' Association (or BDA) recognizes the finest work in the graphics-intensive broadcast design field. At last year's BDA Awards in New York, Denver-based Impossible Pictures finished with one gold and two silvers thanks in part to its smart, innovative talent working with Discreet® Flint® and Discreet® Smoke® workstations.

"Broadcast design is a challenging field in which to work. The world that our clients live in is extremely fast-paced and decisions have to be made very quickly, all while maintaining very high standards," says Joel Pilger, President and Senior Discreet Artist for Impossible Pictures. "This means we have to be flexible, responsive, and fast. I would be very nervous about trying to satisfy our clients' needs using something other than Flint or Smoke."

Impossible Pictures relies on Autodesk's Discreet Flint and Smoke software, companion licensed software running on two Linux® workstations. A resolution-independent system with the ability to capture and play back RGB media, Discreet Flint 9.5 has a wide range of visual effects creation and compositing tools, including Action, the industry-renowned 3D compositing environment; layer-based paint; motion-estimation time warp; batch text; and high-speed, interactive tracking and image stabilization. Discreet Smoke 7 is a 64-bit, resolution-independent finishing system with features such as a complete editorial toolset, the incomparable Master Keyer and Colour Warper" functionality, 3D compositing environment, stabilizer/tracker, text module, and field-accurate I/O module integrated within one environment.

"I like that Flint provides a flexible creative toolset that accommodates designers' individual workflows for creating visual effects. I can execute ideas with ease and meet deadlines in a timely fashion," states Hector Espinosa, VFX Artist. "Among many great features, my favorite tool is Batch. Being able to build a tree of effects and timelines that coordinate with each other is a key component to handling revisions and quick turnaround."

Located in the heart of lower downtown Denver, the creative digital studio produces broadcast design and television commercials for network television and advertising clients. The company of directors and artists specializes in guiding their clients through a hands-on process to realize their most ambitious visions and offers full creative turnkey production, broadcast design, CGI/animation, editorial, visual effects, and compositing services.

Impossible Pictures

By Claudia Kienzie

Autodesk®



Images courtesy of Impossible Pictures.

Impossible Pictures has produced award-winning work for clients such as Disney, Universal Studios, Discovery Channel, The National Geographic Channel, DISH Network, Ford, Dupont, and Western Union, and has been honored with Emmys, Clios, Addys, and Art Directors awards.

"Many of our clients ask us to develop creative concepts for their project—be it a promo, station ID, program open, or complete channel branding package—and then execute it within very tight timeframes," says Pilger. "We're not an ad agency, but we're often called upon to act like an agency and be a complete creative resource."

That was the case with the launch of the Altitude Sports and Entertainment Network. This new regional sports network required a clever, eye-catching broadcast identity that would uniquely brand their regional sports coverage of teams such as the Colorado Avalanche (NHL) and the Denver Nuggets (NBA). The channel branding campaign that Impossible Pictures developed and executed won the 2005 BDA Gold award for Best Broadcast Design Package for Sports, and a Silver for Best ID.

"The distinctive look we created for Altitude flowed from the idea of 'in sports, when the ball moves, something amazing happens.' A visual theme was created using barometric pressure lines, and how the air reacts to a ball moving through it," says Pilger. "Within Flint Action and Smoke DVE modules, we used many tools, including displacement mapping to deform and distort the images around the balls, and sophisticated tracking to marry 2D rotoscoped footage and 3D animation elements." These effects were combined, layered, and edited to create a unique visual solution.

"We assign complex, time-sensitive projects to Flint and Smoke because we can absolutely count on them. And we get better results than can be achieved using any competing software," says Pilger.

One such project was a promo package for "Astronaut Diaries," slated for Discovery's Science Channel. The show featured video shot by one of the astronauts of the ill-fated Space Shuttle Columbia, which burned up during re-entry over Texas in 2003.

"Since this footage chronicled two years of training leading up to their journey into space from the astronauts' point of view, our concept for the promo was to have viewers see images through the glass of an astronaut's helmet," says Pilger. "Flint compositing tools were used to project and distort video on the amber-tinted, glass visor of a 3D helmet, and Autodesk® Sparks® plug-ins for lens flares and distortion completed the effect."

Pilger and Impossible Pictures' Smoke Artist Brian Eloë finished the promo package in Smoke, including the critical job of crafting appropriate edits considering the sensitive subject matter.

"Smoke is a very powerful NLE platform with a functional timeline for cuts, effects, color correction plus multiple tracks of audio...all at breakneck speed," says Eloë. "And, because Smoke also integrates many powerful compositing tools, a Smoke artist can go way beyond simple EDL assembly to really perfect and finesse the desired creative look for a finished piece."