

Mass Animation
(www.massanimation.com)
Santa Monica, California

Autodesk® Maya®

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—Susan Purcell
Director of Design & Business Affairs
Mass Animation

It takes all kinds.

Mass Animation uses Autodesk Maya to help bring animation to the world and the world to animation.



Image courtesy of Mass Animation.

Summary

As Vice Chairman of Sony Pictures Entertainment and President of Sony Pictures Digital, Yair Landau knew he had a pretty good gig. With his hands on the pulse of the animation, visual effects, and game worlds, Landau and his teams had experienced more than their share of achievements, awards, and other accolades during his seventeen year tenure. Even so, Landau felt something exciting brewing and knew he wanted to be a part of it.

“Observing the rapid changes in digital technology over the years, I had a good idea of the direction things were heading,” says Landau. “I have always believed that technology is primarily to make creative storytelling more accessible for more people. With that in mind, I started looking into the possibilities of making a ‘Wikimovie’, an animated short film collaboratively created by interested animators from all over the world. That’s how Mass Animation got started.”

The Challenge

Unofficially, Landau thought of the project as a “social sandbox,” an online destination where animators from across the world could get together to play. Officially, he founded Mass Animation in August 2008 to create an entirely new production model: a virtual animation studio offering an open invitation to artists to connect and collaborate on a whole new generation of stories.

Designing and developing an innovative animation application for Facebook® social networking website, Mass Animation sent out the call to the world’s animators, along with a free, 60-day trial version of Autodesk® Maya® software, enabling them to animate individual storyboards and 3D models for a short animated film. The result is *Live Music*, just over six minutes of delightful story, mesmerizing music, and pristine animation.

The Solution

“From the beginning, I considered Maya to be an absolutely essential building block in Mass Animation’s success,” says Landau. “We were determined to produce a piece on par with the very highest-quality animated films out there. I knew we needed Maya to make that happen.”

With that in mind, Landau and Mass Animation Director of Design & Business Affairs Susan Purcell approached Autodesk with the creative and educational opportunity of a lifetime. In short order, Autodesk agreed to provide no less than 10,000 full-featured licenses of Autodesk Maya, all free-of-charge for a 60-day trial period. Launching their application on November 17, 2008, Mass Animation invited animators to download storyboards, 3D models, and their copy of Autodesk Maya from Facebook.

Autodesk®

“The response was immediate and very positive,” says Purcell. “From the day we launched, people began scanning our Facebook page and adding our application. With the click of a button, potential participants were able to view a story reel of our film where they could see the 107 individual shots that would make up the film. Once they chose a shot to work on, another button helped them download Autodesk Maya. It worked extremely well.”

A week later, a multitude of far-flung artists began uploading their animations. Following extensive review by a talented group of Jury Members, the works of 51 artists from 17 different countries were selected for inclusion in the final film.

The Results

Since launching in theaters (together with TriStar Pictures’ *Planet 51*), *Live Music* has been accepted to no fewer than six film festivals, and won an award at the Chicago International Children’s Festival. Even without those honors, however, a simple viewing of the film proves that the innovative process worked big-time.

Despite working with such a large and diverse team of animators, Landau describes the experience as nearly seamless:

“The most rewarding aspect of this project was that literally all the animators were absolutely delightful to work with,” he says. “Concurrently developing both the application and the film was often challenging, but the actual submission and integration of the Maya files went amazingly smoothly. Over 90% of the winners’ shots worked the first time we integrated them from the Facebook pipeline. That is pretty amazing.”



Image courtesy of Mass Animation.

The experience was clearly a positive one for the participants as well:

We actually circulated a questionnaire about the experience afterwards,” says Purcell. “Many of the participants said how much they appreciated the opportunity to work with Autodesk Maya on a major animated work and with people in a professional atmosphere. This was just a huge opportunity, both for us and for all these animators.”

Live Music has been so successful, in fact, that Mass Animation has already moved on to their next

big collaborative project, this time teaming up with DC Universe™ Online. Animators will have the chance to work on a true dream project, animating some of the most iconic Super Heroes in DC Comics’ illustrious history.

For more information, check out www.massanimation.com or join the fun on Facebook at www.facebook.com/DCUniverseOnline.

For more information about Autodesk Maya, visit www.autodesk.com/maya.



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