



Image courtesy of Ubisoft, Prince of Persia® Warrior Within

The hits keep coming from Ubisoft's Montreal studio, thanks to incredible talent and Autodesk® 3ds Max® animation software.

Behind every fierce warrior and brilliant hero in Ubisoft's acclaimed videogames is a team of animation wizards. And behind the wizards at Ubisoft's Montreal studio, which employs over 1,000 creative individuals, is Autodesk® 3ds Max®.

New videogames sweep the global entertainment market

The end of 2004 marked the most important and exciting launch for Ubisoft's Saint-Laurent street development studio since its creation in 1997. To the delight of devoted fans around the world, and top accolades from the videogame industry, the Montreal powerhouse released new games in each of its wildly popular Tom Clancy, Myst, and Prince of Persia franchises.

To create these cutting-edge titles, Ubisoft's creative teams tapped the power of Discreet's 3ds max software. As the studio's long-standing 3D animation tool of choice, 3ds max allowed Ubisoft game developers to once again bring highly developed characters, vivid scenery, and devastating combative powers to life on a variety of game platforms, including Microsoft's Xbox, Sony's PlayStation 2, and Nintendo's GameCube.

"Your fate has been written. You will die."

The newest Prince of Persia installment, Warrior Within, reached record sales of 1.8 million units in the first two weeks alone. One of the most highly anticipated action-adventure games of all time, the sword-slashing sequel to the critically acclaimed Prince of Persia The Sands of Time™ stars a darker, edgier Prince on a journey to defy his own preordained death.



Image courtesy of Ubisoft, Prince of Persia® Warrior Within

To help him accomplish his mission, the Prince benefits from an intricate new free-form fighting system, developed with 3ds max. “Each game fan will find his or her own unique fighting style as they manipulate their environment and their enemies,” explains Yannis Mallat, Executive Producer for the Prince of Persia brand. “They can dig into an arsenal of weapons that, when used in combination, create advanced arm attacks that verge on fatal artistry!”

Tight timelines and high expectations demand a reliable tool

“This is our second project in the Prince of Persia franchise, and the demand to deliver motion-picture quality graphics and animation was extremely high,” says Gadi Pollack, Associate Producer for Warrior Within. “With less than 12 months to create an enormous amount of animation—over 50 weapons, 20 characters, and 30 levels—keeping the pipeline as efficient and productive as possible was imperative.”

Mallat agrees, adding, “Because 3ds max is so popular among top-notch animators, it was easy to add new members to the team as production evolved. It is with thanks in part to the reliability of 3ds max that we stayed on target with our very demanding production schedule on this game.”

Unleashing artists’ creativity

Gamers aren’t the only ones having fun when it comes to Prince of Persia Warrior Within. Using powerful 3ds max capabilities including character studio®, Ubisoft artists were able to let their imaginations run wild.

With a unique non-linear animation mixer, scalable behavioral crowd simulation capabilities, and extensive motion capture filtering and editing facilities, character studio gave Prince of Persia animators the power and flexibility they needed to rig and animate the large number of high-quality characters and scenes. “character studio is simple and efficient; it’s the perfect tool for game animation,” says Lead Animator, Sylvain Bernard. “It really lets the animator be creative without having to worry too much about the technical aspects.”

The team found the biped plug-in for character studio—which gives animators access to Acceleration, Speed and “Jerk” motion properties as well as a powerful system for analyzing and correcting motion properties—especially useful. “Biped helped us maintain, share, and reuse standard character set-ups with simple ‘copy and paste’,” explains Bernard. “The unique workflow was key to speeding production”.

The future holds...

While the Prince’s fate may be up in the air for now, Warrior Within has already sealed its place in gaming history with a blockbuster reception by the public, and a plethora of awards and critical acclaim from the industry. So what is in store for the Prince’s next adventure? While he can’t reveal secrets about new games that may be on the drawing board, Bernard says he is looking forward to exploring the latest innovations from Discreet. “3ds max is well implanted in our production pipelines, and I am confident that it will continue to rise to our production challenges and meet our artists’ needs.”