

FX&Mat
(fxandmat.blogspot.com)
Paris, France

Autodesk® 3ds Max® software

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—Mathieu Landour
Director,
FX&Mat

Two Guys And A Bank.

FX&Mat Use Autodesk 3ds Max Create a Campaign with Legs for the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC).



Image Courtesy of Royal Bank of Canada, Mr. Longlegs, by FX & Mat.

Summary

A directorial collaboration, FX&Mat is really the team of François Xavier Goby and Matthieu Landour, two former classmates at France's Supinfocom (<http://www.supinfocom-arles.fr>, www.supinfocom.fr) a "school of higher education" specializing in computer graphics. Since graduating two short years ago, the pair has been making lots of noise in the advertising world, most recently (and notably) working with Paris-based, production company Mr. Hyde and advertising agency BBDO Toronto to create a campaign for the Royal Bank of Canada (www.rbc.com). François and Matthieu got on the phone with Autodesk to talk about how the Autodesk® 3ds Max® software skills they picked up at school helped them beat some stiff competition to land the lucrative gig.

The Challenge of Mr. Long Legs

It was just a couple of years ago that Goby and Landour got together (with fellow student Edouard Jouret) for the final project of their studies at Superinfocom. Using Autodesk 3ds Max and their vivid imaginations, the trio created the sublime "En Tus Brazos" (www.entusbrazos.fr), the bittersweet tale of a once world-famous tango dance partnership. Just a few short minutes long, "En Tus Brazos" (In Your Arms) was an immediate hit with their professors, and was soon making the festival rounds. The film picked up several awards, including an Award of Excellence at SIGGRAPH® 2006.

It was an auspicious start to a partnership that is bearing some exceptional fruit. In addition to being directors, FX&Mat are talented motion and graphic designers, making them a powerful team for all types of advertising projects. Not long after setting themselves up as freelancers, some big names came calling:

"We were working on several different projects when we were asked to pitch on the RBC campaign," says Goby. "It was only when we'd accepted that we discovered that several very big studios were also pitching. That made us nervous, but we decided our best shot was to take some chances, not be too safe. That was the only way we could do something great. We came up with an idea we liked, it went very well, and a couple of days later we were working on the biggest campaign of our careers."

With just six weeks to bring their ambitious idea to fruition, FX&Mat pushed Autodesk 3ds Max to its limits. Designed to sell the idea that using the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) VISA Avion credit card enables you to accumulate air miles and take more exotic vacations faster, the spot opens with a pair of stockinged feet gradually proceeding eastward across a blue sky. A ruby red Cardinal flits about on one shin before the camera reveals the long legs emerging from a high-rise window. Inside, a father awakes to discover his new, elongated limbs.

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Delighted, he lifts his children on to his shoulders and begins taking earth-devouring strides across the world. Crossing the ocean by stepping on the backs of some helpful whales, the family steps over the Great Wall of China, reaches the peaks of the great pyramids, and breezes through the clouds in the sky. In Africa, the children slide down their father's legs like little firefighters to play with the giraffes, elephants, and rhinoceri.

"The biggest challenge on this project was maintaining a 2D illustrative aspect while working in 3D," says Goby. "Even though we didn't have much time, we were determined to create a believable illusion of depth in each scene. Autodesk 3ds Max helped us get it done."

The Solutions

"We had only a short time to complete everything," says the duo, who is still at work on the print and web campaigns that accompany the spot. "We wanted an evocative, memorable character, and we decided to create a lot of the sets in 2D. We did not, however, want a flat look; we wanted everything coherent and working together. We used the camera mapping capabilities in 3ds Max to project our drawings on to 3D models. We were able to give a strong illusion of depth, but still maintain the illustrative style that is the hallmark of the spot. It was fantastic to have 3ds Max camera mapping, and it worked really well."

While the duo learned their craft on Autodesk 3ds Max, they've also worked with virtually all the competing products, only to return to their first choice. Says Goby:

"The great thing about 3ds Max is its ease of use. We've worked with all the 3D software out there, but with 3ds Max, all you need is an idea and you can get it done. On the RBC project, we had to create a very precise drawing of our character's hair flying in the wind. We pushed the 3ds Max hair rendering capability to its limit. It was a big challenge but we got it done. What's more, as our projects get bigger we are relying on freelance professionals more and more. There are a lot of people out there who know and love 3ds Max, which it makes easier to find people to help out. The online community is also nice and extensive. It's amazing to see how many people are using 3ds Max."



Image Courtesy of Royal Bank of Canada, Mr. Longlegs, by FX & Mat.

The Results

The RBC campaign has been airing since the summer, and has met with great enthusiasm...even from some of FX&Mat's competitors.

"When we were pitching for the RBC job, one of our competitors was Nexus," says Landour. "Since we've completed the job, we've also signed a contract to work with Nexus, and we've had a lot of interest from other companies as well."

Greater flattery is certainly difficult to come by. In the coming months and years to come, FX&Mat plan on creating more 3D animations, videos, special effects and 3D integrations. Some short film, and even feature film work also seems to be coming up.

With such a bright future, it seems likely that FX&Mat will soon be looking back at this RBC job as the one that put them on the road to the big time. The duo is certainly grateful for the chance:

"It was really great to work with BBDO Toronto," says Goby. "They showed a great deal of confidence and trust in two young guys from Paris, and it was great working with them. We certainly hope to do it again soon."

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