

COMPANY

Screaming Death Monkey

www.screamingdeathmonkey.com

LOCATION

Los Angeles, California

SOFTWARE

Autodesk® Smoke®

Complete Control

Autodesk asks Jeremy Hunt and Screaming Death Monkey to show exactly how Autodesk Smoke software helps “Fix it in Post.”

This was a dream gig. Autodesk made it clear that they just wanted me to create something cool and would get people excited about Smoke.

—Jeremy Hunt

Owner and Lead Artist
Screaming Death Monkey



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Summary

When veteran filmmaker and visual effects artist Jeremy Hunt of Los Angeles-based [Screaming Death Monkey](#) began making “[Fix It In Post](#)” -- a new short film about one man’s life being continually edited, enhanced, and generally endangered by a particularly hardworking editor/VFX artist – he had just a couple of simple directives: make it look cool, and make it using [Autodesk® Smoke®](#) software.

“This was a dream gig,” says Hunt, who wrote, directed, edited, post produced, and otherwise created the short film at Autodesk’s request. “As a director, you’re usually given a concept or an idea by your client. You try establish your take and voice on it, but it usually comes from somebody else. Autodesk made it clear that they just wanted me to create something cool and would get people excited about Smoke.”

Hunt is no newcomer to the filmmaking game. Inspired to make movies after his Dad took him to see *Star Wars* at the age of 3, Hunt got his official start in the mid-1990’s when he was an intern at a

company called Digital Muse, where he worked on some of the first effects-intensive television shows, including *Star Trek: Voyager* and *The X Files*. It was there that he met fellow effects artist Bruce Britnit, with whom he would make “[405](#),” a hilarious short that used some eye-popping effects work to land an immense passenger plane on a public highway and on top of an unsuspecting SUV. Posted to the web in 2001, “405” is generally considered the first viral video and a creative milestone in the history of the Internet.

Hunt would go on to found Screaming Death Monkey and has since worked on a wide variety of high-profile film and television projects. It was, however, his simple tweet about a free trial version of Smoke that brought him to the immediate attention of Autodesk and got “Fix It In Post” on to the drawing board. Having used Smoke to cut his latest demo reel in just a few hours, Hunt took to Twitter to write: “Loving @autodesk #smoke2013. Fast, elegant and versatile. Learned the basics by cutting a new reel.” It only took a few hours more for Autodesk to contact him about the project.

The Challenge

"As soon as Autodesk asked me to create this film, I started thinking about the challenging and funny things that happen when you're editing and creating visual effects," says Hunt. "You add explosions that aren't timed right, flashes from gun barrels that are too big or too small, lighting and titles that look weird or are in the wrong place, that kind of thing. You then have to fix them, but I started playing with the idea of how these effects and alterations would appear in a real person's life. I mean, Smoke is software where editing meets effects. The best way to reveal its capabilities is to show it in action."

"Fix It In Post" opens with the emotional break-up of a young couple who have just emerged from a restaurant. No sooner has the male lead expressed his apologies than an unidentified entity sitting at a Mac computer freezes the action, makes a few swipes with a stylus, and clicks to restart the action. The breakup is repeated from a different angle and with slightly different dialogue. The young man looks deeply confused, but the repetition is only the beginning of his troubles.

As the god-like editor/vfx artist goes about "fixing" the story, the male lead lives through every editing change. A variety of fiery explosions occur and recede, 3D titles suddenly appear to conk the protagonist's head. Day turns to night in an instant, and the hero suddenly finds himself in the middle of some kind of crime going wrong. After a gunfight, he gives chase to the retreating criminals on a motorcycle, only to have their car suddenly vanish and appear on his tail.

Escaping into a warehouse, he sees his former girlfriend, who asks him if he can "disarm" what looks like a green cube. The cube is, of course, quickly



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replaced by the effects artist with a 3D model of an about-to-explode bomb. To escape the impending blast, the man attempts to jump from the building roof and falls, but stops just inches from the asphalt. Bewildered, he looks over his shoulder to discover the rigging attached to his back being carefully removed. Climbing to his feet, he watches as three cars, and then an entire building vanish from the landscape in front of him. Gradually, the entire scene is replaced with a green screen set.

In just under nine minutes of funny and familiar examples, "Fix It In Post" tells Hunt's story about how the vital work of visual effects artists and digital editors make today's movies better and more believable. What's more, Hunt says he was able to learn even more about the multifaceted capabilities of Smoke, even as he was revealing and extolling their benefits.

The Solution

"I'm still surprised when some of my most carefully conceived production plans just don't work," says Hunt. "They seem great at first, and even better when they're storyboarded, but when it comes down to shooting, they're too long or boring or something else. For that reason, I tend to continue creating the entire time I'm proceeding with the project. I don't like having to change machines or software as I'm working. Just like in our film, things are being changed all the time as the project progresses. I need to see my story as it evolves and develops. On this project, I deliberately stayed in Smoke for everything. I pushed my ideas as far as I ever have, and Smoke never let me down."

For Hunt, having "editing meet effects" as it does in the current version of Autodesk Smoke represents a more natural, and extremely powerful, progression.

"Smoke is the first product that truly enables me to work the way I want to work," he says. "Even if I hadn't been editing, the way that I could so quickly cut together VFX shots in context and see if they are working is hugely valuable. Smoke was fantastic because I could lay things down, do a quick edit, lay in really fast temp effects, and then make sure everything was timed correctly. Being able to make, see, and share those changes quickly was crucial to getting the right feel."

Asked to describe some of his favorite features in Smoke, Hunt quickly zeroes in on the integration of ConnectFX node-based compositing and the software's powerful timeline effects capabilities:

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"The addition of ConnectFX really transforms the landscape," he says. "The integration of ConnectFX has changed the game for me. It works phenomenally well and is immensely powerful. I never had to jump out of the program to do effects or finishing. We could basically do it all using Smoke. With the timeline effects, you can do a color correction, a recomposition, or whatever you need to do, and you can play them back the second you lay them in. To see your changes that interactively is extremely important when you're trying to tell your story."

To watch "Fix it in Post" and learn more about Smoke software, visit www.autodesk.com/editingmeetseffects

For more information about Autodesk software for Media and Entertainment, visit www.autodesk.com/me.