

Specialist Matte Paintings

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Hatchfx is a specialist matte painting company, although as we discovered when talking to the founders, a "matte painting" is now a hard term to define. As the line between matte painting and visual effects blurs, we explored some of their work on the film and the methodology they use to tackle shots.

Hatchfx was established in 2001 when Deak Ferrand contract was up @ R!OT. Ferrand was a senior matte painter at R!OT with an excellent reputation in the industry, helping to establish POP's/R!OT's reputation as leader in CGI and digital matte paintings. Ferrand actually is Swiss and classically trained in painting and sculpting.

The other cofounder was vfx producer Cheryl Bainum, also from R!OT. Filling out the other top positions was Dominic Daigle who joined the team in early 2003 as a Senior FX Animator (senior CG artist). The company has been part of some high profile films such as 'Lord of the Rings', *Scorpion King*, *The Rundown*, *Hellboy*, *The Chronicles of Riddick*, *The Manchurian Candidate* and most recently *Shooter*.

fxg: What is the majority of your work?

hatchfx: The majority of our work is conceptual design in early pre production all the way through to post mostly on vfx involving matte paintings- however much of the conceptual art can be used to tie vfx with set designs etc which involves in the early stages with the Production designer, DP and of course the Director. Some concept art is produced very early on with a writer needing to be fed some artwork to help the writing process, which usually runs through the development phase of a project before it is even green lit.



Final Shot



Original Plate

fxg: With respect to matte paintings, often times they used to be stills - then stills with live action comped in, and increasingly they are digital environments. Do you do much camera mapping ?

hatchfx: All matte paintings are visual effects shots. The opening shot of Shooter has a lot more painting than meets the eye. The burning village is a matte painting, the equipment from the rig is also a painting, the road where we removed or painted the cliffs are matte paintings in sections- humvees and pipeline are pure 3D. Whenever possible we do projection matte paintings- the first one I did was back in 97...tools since then have made my life easier.

fxg: How did you approach the work you did on Shooter?

hatchfx: With a lot of methodology!.....Deak was on set Sept and Oct 2006- plates were being turned over mid Oct with an early February Delivery. I added 2 artists to the team for 7 weeks. I only look for top talent, Deak doesn't have time to teach so I want the best- they come at a price but well worth it. Less headaches and they know what it takes to get the job done as highest quality

fxg: Can you discuss the material you had to work with for the Africa sequence ? (Canada vs Africa)

hatchfx: Nothing was shot in Africa but a portion of the movie is supposed to take place there.....for some shots we removed landscape that was not consistent with Africa for others we created it from Scratch (all digital).

fxg: how many shots in total did you do?

hatchfx: 90 total. The team used Softimage XSI, realviz, after effects, particle illusion and many different plug ins to achieve the shots.

fxg: How long does one budget for a major shot? in terms of time and revisions..

It really depends.....we had 14 weeks of post...but shots come in over that period of time. I will always be very explicit up front that the complicated shots need to be turned over asap, but you must remember the edit is still not finished.....



Final Shot



Original Plate



Final Shot



Original Plate

fxg: Given your creating the 'wide" shot often times followed by lots of live action in close ups etc - how key is it to see where your shot fits in the edit. To be able to design the wide establishing shot - knowing the following shots?

hatchfx: Yes, Getting cut sequence is crucial, so we are very involved with the editing room.



Final Shot



Original Photo