

AV VIDEO MULTIMEDIA

Producer®

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Jim Kent,
ArtGecko Productions

Is HD Ready For Its Close-Up?

Bringing high-def tools
into the production mix

360° Audio Editing

DAWs embrace
5.1-channel sound

Med TV

Hardware for
hospital networks



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TEST PATTERNS: Apple's Final Cut Pro 4 • Panasonic's AJ-SDX900 • HP's Workstation xw4100

success on the SMALL SCREEN

Software, hardware and display news from SIGGRAPH 2003

SIGGRAPH IS STILL VERY MUCH A SHOW GEARED TOWARD THE FILM AND GAMING EFFECTS COMMUNITIES. BUT A HANDFUL OF NOTABLE NEW PRODUCTS INTRODUCED AT THIS YEAR'S EXHIBITION, AS WELL AS DISPLAY TECHNOLOGY IN THE EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES VENUE, CUT A SWATH THROUGH THE CLUTTER BY SHOWCASING FEATURES THAT PRODUCERS AT EVERY LEVEL OF PRODUCTION COULD USE.

BY BETH MARCHANT


Software

Adobe Atmosphere, a much-anticipated seed project from **Adobe** (www.adobe.com) that has been ten years in the making, is finally nearing a ship date. I can't tell you exactly when the authoring tool will be released or how much it will cost, but expect to see an announcement soon. Atmosphere lets you combine animated 3D objects, sounds, textures, real-time physics, Flash animations and streaming video (QuickTime, Windows Media or AVI files) inside an interactive environment that can be embedded within PDF documents or sent over the Web. Imagine a PDF training manual with collaborative illustrations, or before purchasing a concert ticket online, imagine "walking" down the aisle of

the venue as you preview your seat for an upcoming show. An invisible and endless trail of JavaScript code, and its own multithreaded JavaScript engine, makes Atmosphere's interactive stage sets—featuring all of their imported animated props—possible over standard network connections. You can already download the Atmosphere player, a free plug-in for Web browsers and PDF documents. Adobe hopes Atmosphere's unique interface will distinguish it from other interactive authoring tools already on the market (The robust **Anark Studio 2** (www.anark.com), mentioned in my pre-show report, comes to mind). Says Michael Kaplan, Adobe's director of emerging business Web3D/Atmosphere, "Atmosphere is a kind of InDesign for 3D environments, where 3D is the container, not just an asset or effect that you drop into your presentation timeline." Adobe also showed the much improved After Effects 6.0. You can get the pro package for only \$999.

Another assembly tool with great potential for the business-media market was introduced by **Instant Effects** (www.instanteffects.com), a new company started by former executives of Discreet and Alias|Wavefront. On the user end, Instant Effects will release OfficeFX, a plug-in that transforms PowerPoint slides by embedding layered 3D scenes into PowerPoint actions. On the creation end, the company will soon make a developer SDK available to 3D artists for creating these 3D transitions and scenes, or "FX Themes." The artists can then market the themes to media managers or directly to those making the presentations. The company hopes to announce pricing and release dates early this fall.

In other software news, **Alias** (www.alias.com) came to the show with a shortened name, a new logo and a full set of DVD and print learning tools to support the recently released Maya 5. If you haven't checked out Maya yet, download the free Maya Personal Learning Edition 5 from www.alias.com/mayple. It watermarks your work, but gives you self-paced tutorials to help you along the 3D learning



The 3D concert hall created in Adobe Atmosphere (left) could be added to a PDF or Web site. Below, a stock effect from Artbeats' new Dreamlight 2 collection

