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JANUARY 2012

VES AWARDS PRELUDE



2012 finalists revealed



An inside look at the VES



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VES:

Evolving to Serve the Needs of Its Members

A lot can change in 15 years.

In 1996, when the Visual Effects Society (VES) began to form a community of VFX practitioners, the industry was very different from what it is today. Back then, nearly the entire industry was centered in Los Angeles—if you wanted to work in the industry, that is where you went for a job. The tools of the trade were hard to come by: Software, for the most part, was still produced in-house, and computers that ran the programs were extremely expensive. Often, those hoping to get a foot in the door relied on others already “inside” to take them under their wing and train them. Today, the industry is spread out across the globe. Off-the-shelf software is used to generate cutting-edge imagery and work, while high-end computers (along with memory, processing power, and GPUs) are inexpensive, readily available, and fit within everyone’s budget. Also, specialty facilities and schools abound, training newcomers and ushering them out into this still-exciting field.

Similarly, the issues that were at the forefront for those joining the VES a decade and a half ago are different from the concerns of the present-day members. As a result, the VES’s role has evolved with those concerns and needs in mind, so it can remain a relevant organization for its members.

“The VES has evolved from a small group of professionals sitting around a single table, into a large community of professionals sitting around the world, into a trusted community in which information is shared and exchanged, regardless of where you are today,” says Jeffrey Okun, VES chair.

Nevertheless, the aim of the Society remains the same today as it did many years ago. “Our mission is to advance the arts, sciences, and applications of visual effects, and to improve the welfare of our members by providing professional enrichment and education, fostering community, and promoting industry recognition,” says Okun.

Taking Root

An attempt by a group of facility owners to start a society for those working in the visual effects industry failed to take root in the early 1990s. But another attempt a few years later—this one driven by artists and facility management—proved more fruitful, and the Visual Effects Society was born. The first chairman was ILM’s Jim Morris, with Tom Atkin serving as the founding executive director.

“The idea was that this would be a professional honorary society and a place to promote the art, science, and technology of visual effects,” notes Okun.

At the start, there was not a large membership—Okun, in fact, is member number 76. The initial board of directors comprised approximately 20 people. “As it grew, we had many luminaries in the industry serve on the board of directors to frame and guide the Society: Ed Catmull, Jim Morris, Dennis Muren, Ken Ralston, Ray Feeney, Jonathan Erland, and Carl Rosendahl (the second chairman of the Society), among

others. The cream of the crop," says Okun.

As Okun points out, what got the organization started in the first place was the artists' excitement to share what they were doing and the need for camaraderie. "We were a lonely, misunderstood bunch of artists who could create anything but were thought of as geeks and outsiders," he says with a bit of sarcasm.

According to Okun, the visual effects industry grew up an orphan—it was the only group on set or in post that was not getting health and welfare benefits, paid overtime, and so forth while working in the entertainment industry. "We're still an unrepresented

group of people, though many have tried to start unions to represent us, but they continue to fail," he says. "However, the VES will never be a union. It will never be a trade organization. We will always be a professional honorary society. Our goal will always be to serve, honor, and educate, to get good information out to our members, and others in the industry, even non-members, in order that they may benefit from what we do."

Membership

Today's visual effects practitioners operate in a global work environment. "I have not shot a film in LA since 1994," Okun points out. "Being global, the needs of our community have grown significantly, and because we are so far-flung, there are a lot of dark spots in the knowledge of simple things, like: What does a roto person earn? Can you get 'kill fees' if someone books you but ends up not hiring you and, meanwhile, you have turned down other work? What is the best plug-in for the latest software version? Or even, what should I expect when working in a certain region or country?"

The VES today boasts more than 2500 members in 29 countries, making it a true international organization. There are six sections within the Society: Bay Area, Vancouver, New York, London, Australia, and New Zealand, with a possible Montreal group added soon. Each of these sections handles its own local and regional meetings and puts on its own events, which are recorded and shared with members throughout the world, so they can tune in and hear what is taking place.

The VES has a board of directors comprising 30 elected volunteers from among the membership. Also, there is an executive committee, elected by the board, that meets monthly, and both the board and committee work closely with Eric Roth, VES executive director, "to ensure that we stay on track and keep doing the business of the Society," says Okun. In addition, each of the six sections has a set of board managers who typically meet bimonthly.

Board members are elected to a two-year term, with the possibility of serving three two-year terms consecutively. The chair and executive committee members are elected from the board to one-year terms. "The point is to serve the members and advance the art and the industry in positive, meaningful ways—to selflessly give of yourself in order to benefit," notes Okun.

Okun has been a mainstay on the board and the executive committee, and is coming to the end of his third term.



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There are two types of members: Active, which requires five years of hands-on visual effects experience within the last 10 years and two letters of endorsement from current members; and Associate, which does not require hands-on VFX experience, but the person must be involved in other aspects of the visual effects industry (PR, training, and so forth). The overall requirement is that the members work in some part of the entertainment industry that involves visual effects—commercials, games, special venues, features, television, webisodes, animation; it also includes such work as scientific visualization and industrial design, even though they are technically outside the entertainment realm.

careers, and to students seeking degrees in film or television.

The Albert Whitlock Scholarships were open to VES members and students who plan to attend any type of accredited schools in pursuit of certificates of completion in order to gain marketable skills in visual effects.

"The committee was gratified by the level of talent displayed by all the applicants. We are pleased that the recipients represent a good cross-section of studies and educational institutions. This bodes well for the future of our industry," says Pam Hogarth, VES Scholarship Committee chair. "We look forward to watching our recipients move forward in pursuing their dreams and careers."

powerful overviews of related areas, address the professionals. Futurists, scientists, financial wizards, and technologists have all spoken and changed the points of view on the industry, the future, and what it might take to be successful in it.

Perhaps one of the most anticipated events is the annual VES Awards, which recognizes the most outstanding visual effects work of the year and honors the artists who created them. Unlike the Oscars, which focus on feature films and short films, the VES Awards recognize the core visual effects work in a range of projects, including those in games, on television, at special venues, and so forth. The awards go even further, recognizing a host of



"We are a 'feel-good' group of guys and girls. By that, I mean we want to provide events, screenings, hands-on experiences, and educational, training, and job events," says Okun.

As part of its educational focus, in May of this year, the VES announced the recipients of its scholarship program, designed to honor three of the greatest visual effects luminaries: Peter Ellenshaw, Douglas Trumbull, and Albert Whitlock. All three scholarship funds were open to VES members and students. Applications were vetted by the VES Scholarship Committee, which then forwarded its recommendations to the board of directors for approval. A fourth scholarship award, named for and honoring Linwood Dunn, was given out earlier.

The Peter Ellenshaw Scholarships were open to VES members or students who plan to attend accredited schools in pursuit of any type of graduate or post-graduate degrees or certificates in fine or graphic arts.

The Douglas Trumbull Scholarships were available to VES members who wished to continue their education in all aspects of motion pictures in order to expand the scope of their

Another function of the Society is to provide vital information to its members. There are times when members need help finding a solution to a technical problem, and the VES provides them with a forum to exchange ideas. "Our members eagerly share non-proprietary information with one another, so that if someone in Vancouver is having a problem, and someone in London has a solution, they exchange that information," says Okun. "In doing so, you are raising the level of the work around the world while honoring your community."

In addition, the VES holds various social events, educational events, and panels. This past fall, the VES held its third annual Entertainment Industry Production Summit, a gathering of leading executives, creatives, technologists, and visionaries. That event focused on discussing and examining the future of the industry and art, and the opportunities and challenges it presents the entertainment industry and artists—but in a way that was energizing and factual. Typically, individuals from outside the industry, but with amazingly

visual effects functions, from compositing to animation, model creation, and environment construction.

Over the years, the scope of the VES Awards event has grown significantly. The first show, held nine years ago at the Skirball Center, included 350 attendees. In recent years, the event has sold out venues ranging from the Kodak Grand Ballroom and the Beverly Hilton, with thousands attending.

2.0 Leadership Initiative

Business issues have become a major concern for the VES and its members in recent times, and the Society has brought those concerns to the forefront in what the group is calling, among other names, the "2.0 Leadership Initiative." Since the 2.0 Initiative began, the Society has experienced an increase in members—a testament as to how important this issue is to the VFX community.

In a nutshell, the 2.0 Initiative focuses attention on business-related rights and concerns for those working in the effects industry. "The industry is made up of artists, and as we have

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AT THE HELM

Jeffrey Okun is finishing his third term as VES chair. Here, we provide a snapshot of Okun, who presently heads up the Visual Effects Society.

Okun got his start in the industry in 1978, working with world-renowned graphic designer/filmmaker Saul Bass, who did title sequences, montages, commercials, and documentary films. "I was his gofer, but he put me in a position to learn about VFX back in the photochemical days," says Okun of his mentor. "It was the coolest thing ever."

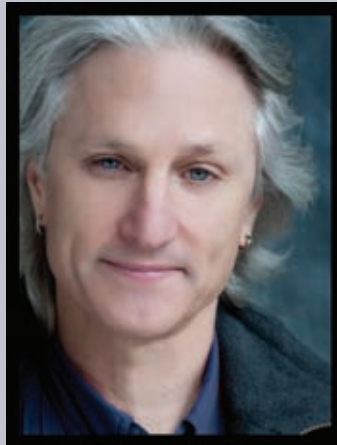
The eager, young Okun also would hang out and pick up information from the optical cameramen and others who would explain what they were doing. It didn't take him long to master the necessary skills, and he eventually became a troubleshooter on movie sets. Afterward, he worked on a number of music videos and commercials, creating in-camera and optical effects. He has also created complex VFX for numerous films, served as visual effects supervisor on many projects, and directed. Most recently, he began working at Prana Studios, a US animation and VFX facility with a sister company in India.

"I am trying to put together an effects arm that abides by all the rules the industry has learned from the 2.0 Initiative," Okun notes.

Okun became involved with the VES "by accident" in 1997 when one of the board members invited him to join. Because there were so few members back then, anyone who joined had to serve on a committee; Okun chose the Awards Committee and soon was appointed chair, a position he held until two years ago.

As chair of the VES, Okun's goals are more "pie in the sky" concepts. His main goal is to make the VES the premier voice of the worldwide visual effects industry—the go-to place for any question about visual effects. Another goal: to keep the community informed and to ensure that the artists and the industry thrive. Out of those grew the 2.0 Initiative. "We saw that the community was not thriving. Artists were being abused, were frustrated, and were giving away things because they didn't really know their rights," Okun says.

When asked what kind of mark, or legacy, he would like to leave behind when he eventually leaves his post, Okun notes he would like to leave a "can-do" attitude so that people will pick up the gauntlet and continue to do what is right for the artists and industry going forward.



while, feel that the fault lies with the studios' business model; the studios, on the other hand, point to the marketplace as the problem. "We are bringing everyone together to have the discussions and facilitate some out-of-the-box thinking to bring about solutions," Okun says. "The players can come to their own informed decisions about what can be done and can't be done [concerning this problem]. Our job is to make sure the conversation continues"

In May 2011, the VES issued an "Open Letter"



to VFX artists and the entertainment industry at large, highlighting the Society's efforts in addressing important business issues as they relate directly to the members. This was followed in September with an Industry Bill of Rights designed to recognize and address numerous industry-wide issues affecting the VES membership and the visual effects industry as a whole.

"We are trying to stay very positive about everything we do. We are not looking for scapegoats," says Okun. "We are trying to get constructive changes made, and get our artists recognized for their talents and abilities. Visual effects artists need to be recognized for what they contribute to the bottom line in the entertainment industry, and be compensated fairly for what they contribute. Some are, but so many others aren't." ●

discovered, artists are not usually the best, most well informed businessmen," Okun says. "It became imperative to educate and inform VES artists about all things business."

Of particular concern are the working conditions of the artists, who are working longer hours for less income, and who are not receiving recognition for their efforts. To deal with these issues, the VES is exploring the creation of a Certification process to see how

to resolve some of these matters.

"We are highlighting what is going on out there and starting to bring all the parties with a stake in the game to the table, so that what is being discussed privately behind closed doors can be talked about publicly so that a solution can be found," says Okun.

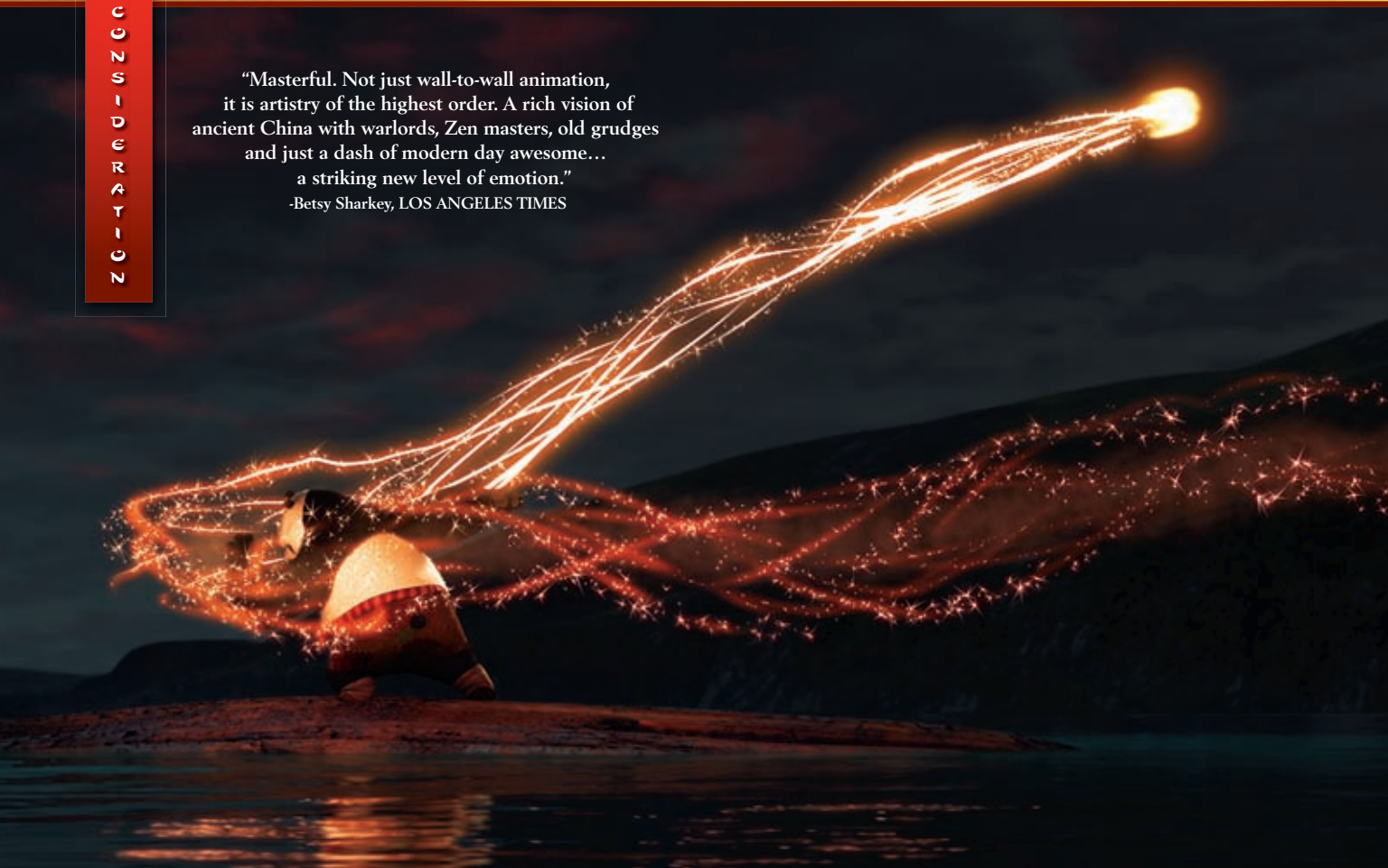
In this ongoing discussion, many artists believe that the facilities are the so-called "Scrooges" in the game; the facilities, mean-

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The visual effects industry is filled with many artists, animators, modelers, rotoscopers, colorists, composers...the list goes on. It is also filled with many talented visual effects supervisors, directors, and so forth. And then there are those at the very top of the industry; their numbers are few, but their vision, creativity, imagination, and drive are unparalleled.

It is from this latter group that the Visual Effects Society selects nominees for its special honorary awards: the Lifetime Achievement Award, the Méliès Award, the Visionary Award, and the Board of Directors Award. No more than two awards are presented each year.

The Lifetime Achievement Award is given to an individual whose lifetime body of work has made huge and lasting impact in visual effects or the industry as a whole. Only seven individuals have received this honor to date. And a person only has to see their names to know how large of a contribution the recipients have made to the industry: George Lucas (2004), Robert Zemeckis (2005), Dennis Muren (2007), Steven Spielberg (2008), Kathleen Kennedy and Frank Marshall (2009), James Cameron (2010), and Ray Harryhausen (2011).

The Georges Méliès Award focuses attention on those whose pioneering efforts have greatly affected the industry. And here the list is shorter: Bob Abel (2005), John Lasseter (2006), Phil Tippett (2009), and Ed Catmull (2010).

The Visionary Award goes to those who use visual effects in such a stunning way as to not only imagine the future and create the possibilities, but also do it in such a way that it is transparent to the audience, where it becomes an invisible part of the storytelling. Initiated last year, this award has one recipient thus far: Christopher Nolan (2011).

The Board of Directors Award, meanwhile, recognizes outstanding service to the Society or the industry. To date, there have been three winners: Tom Atkin (2004), Don Shay (2005), and Jim Morris (2006).

"These are very special individuals," says Jeffrey Okun, VES chair. "They have had significant impact on our industry."

According to Okun, by definition, many people qualify for the awards in general—the winners do not have to be VES members, since the honor covers the industry, not the membership. But in truth, the pool is actually quite small. And while, at first glance, it would seem that finding that rare fish in a vast sea would be extremely difficult, Okun is quick to point out that is not really the case. "Each of the candidates must be singularly outstanding. If you look at the history of who has received these awards, each one has accomplished or contributed something very significant through their art, science, and industry," he adds.

In 2012, the VES will bestow two of these special honors awards at the 10th Annual VES Awards on February 7. Comic-book publisher Stan Lee will receive the VES Lifetime Achievement Award, and Douglas Trumbull will receive the Georges Méliès Award.

STAN LEE

Lifetime Achievement Award

Comic-book publisher and entrepreneur Stan Lee has been selected by the VES Board of Directors as the recipient of the VES 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award. The award honors individuals whose lifetime body of work has made a significant and lasting contribution to the art and/or science of the visual effects industry by way of artistry, invention, and/or groundbreaking work.



Stan Lee is known to millions as the man whose superheroes propelled Marvel Comics to its preeminent position in the comic-book industry. His famous co-creations include Spider-Man, The Incredible Hulk, X-Men, The Fantastic Four, Iron Man, Daredevil, The Avengers, Silver Surfer, and Dr. Strange, among many others.

Lee first became publisher of Marvel Comics in 1972 and is presently chairman emeritus of Marvel Enterprises, Inc. and a member of the Editorial Board at Marvel Comics. In 1977, he introduced Spider-Man as a syndicated newspaper strip that went on to become the most successful of all syndicated adventure strips. Spider-Man now appears in more than 500 newspapers worldwide, making it the longest-running of all superhero strips. More recently, Lee founded and is currently chief creative officer of POW! Entertainment, where he continues to write and create new characters.

"Stan Lee's imagination has created a completely original and profitable niche in the entertainment world, and has allowed visual effects to flex its muscle in service to it," says Jeffrey Okun, VES chair. "Thanks to Lee's fantastic creations and amazing stories, he created a future filled with gadgets and inventions that we aspire to create for real, all the while inspiring the minds and imaginations of storytellers, visual effects artists, and computer wizards everywhere."

Without question, Lee has exerted more influence over the comic-book industry than anyone in history. He created or co-created 90 percent of Marvel's recognized characters, which have been successfully licensed and marketed since 1965. The numbers are staggering—more than two billion of his comic books have been published in 75 countries and in 25 languages.

In 1981, Lee transformed his Spider-Man and Hulk creations into Saturday-morning and syndicated television cartoons. When Marvel Comics and Marvel Productions were acquired by New World Entertainment in 1986, Lee's horizons expanded even further, giving him the opportunity to become more deeply involved in the creation and development of filmed projects for both the big and small screens. He supervised such diverse animated series as *X-Men*, *Spider-Man*, and *The Hulk*. To date, Lee's characters have populated more than 24 separate television series, all of which continue in syndication around the world.

As Okun points out, Lee created a canvas on which to imagine the future. As the creator of this universe, Lee has enabled so many differ-

ent projects in the motion-picture industry and television, which then pushed the VFX industry's science and art forward in a significant way. "You can trace a direct line to him being the father of the comic-book movie," Okun says. "On top of that, especially in his earlier years, he had final approval on how things looked, the story arcs, all manner of things that ultimately led to the visual effects being done in a completely different way and achieving visualizations that had only been done graphically before."

In 2002, *Spider-Man* hit the big screen, in a big way, with its web-slinging effects that left moviegoers on the edge of their seats. The effects-heavy film's box-office success paved the way for two subsequent *Spider-Man* movies, with a fourth scheduled to hit theaters in July. Similarly, the *X-Men* engaged theater audiences in 2000, which led to several more successful *X-Men* releases. The Hulk even earned additional green in 2008, following director Ang Lee's 2003 version. Recently, additional Marvel characters—strengthened by digital magic—have found success at the box office, including this year's *Thor* and *Captain America*.

"As a writer, there is nothing more rewarding than to see your creations brought to life on the screen, and I am indebted to all of the incredibly talented artists who have contributed to my projects," says Lee. "Visual effects have played a pivotal role in the ongoing success of Marvel's characters and have allowed fans to experience their stories in an entirely new way. It is truly a great honor to receive this award from the Visual Effects Society."

Q&A with STAN LEE

This is a prestigious award. What was your initial reaction to hearing the news?

To say I was thrilled would be an understatement. As a guy who got his start doing comic books, you can imagine how surprised and elated I was.

Do you see yourself as a visionary?

I see myself as a writer who loves to specialize in high-concept subject matter. I've just been lucky enough to create some stories and characters that people seem to relate to.

Many of your creations have stepped out of the comic-book pages and onto the silver screen. What was your first reaction?

My first reaction was 'Wow!' The guys doing these movies are geniuses! They've taken comic-book stories and given them glamour, excitement, spectacle, and credibility in a way to appeal to audiences of all ages.

I know this may be difficult, but which characters are your favorites and why?

There are three. The first is *The Thing* from 'Fantastic Four' because I feel he's the most original and most humorous. The second is the Silver Surfer because I was able to insert portions of my own philosophy in his dialog. The third is *Spider-Man* because, how can our most popular, well-known, and successful character not be my favorite? Also, in many ways, he's the most like me.

Over the years you have embraced many different types of media, including the recent characters for the NHL. Does it get easier or more difficult?

Believe it or not, it is neither easier nor more difficult—just more enjoyable each time.

DOUG TRUMBULL

Georges Méliès Award

Visionary filmmaker, innovator, and entrepreneur Douglas Trumbull has been selected by the VES Board of Directors as the recipient of the 2012 Georges Méliès Award. The award honors individuals who have pioneered a significant and lasting contribution to the art and/or science of the visual effects industry by way of artistry, invention, and groundbreaking work.

Trumbull is the embodiment of this award, as someone whose early career included pioneering work in 1968 as one of four effects supervisors on *2001: A Space Odyssey*. He subsequently influenced moviegoers around the world with stunning visual effects in films such as *The Andromeda Strain*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, and *Blade Runner*. In addition, Trumbull directed the feature films *Silent Running* and *Brainstorm*.

In addition, Trumbull has directed numerous expo and special-venue films, videos, and attractions, including "Back to the Future – The Ride."

"Doug Trumbull is a leading light in the field of visual effects and technology," says VES Chair Jeffrey Okun. "He is an innovator in all things entertainment, and equally important is his genius for re-imagining the impossible into a compelling visual that not only has never been seen before, but also goes to the heart of the storytelling. We are honored to know and work with him."

Okun describes Trumbull as a person who is unsatisfied with the status quo. "If you look at *2001*, he pushed the industry forward, and that helped make *Star Wars* possible, even though they were opposite styles," he says. "He then proceeded on to *Blade Runner* and created another reality and pioneering method. *The Tree of Life*, his last film, was stunningly beautiful."

In the 1990s, Trumbull began creating location-based entertainment for specialty venues and theme parks, including the "Back to the Future Ride" at Universal Studios. He even pushed theater technology forward in his capacity as vice chairman of IMAX Corporation and president of its ride-film division. While delving into ride films, he began to incorporate his Showscan process, developed in the late 1970s/early 1980s, which increased the fidelity of movies by rendering an image that is extremely high in resolution and much smoother.

"He is a pioneer in every single aspect of his life," Okun says, noting that even during the BP oil spill, Trumbull had posted video online

of his invention to cap the leak. (Although the video was popular among the YouTube crowd, he never got a response from BP) "He was trying to get people to understand how to use physics to solve the problem," adds Okun.

In addition to the VES award, Trumbull has been a recipient of the American Society of Cinematographer's Lifetime Achievement Award, and has been selected by his peers as a VES Fellow of the Visual Effects Society (only the third such person to receive this distinction).



Trumbull's recent endeavor, Trumbull Ventures LLC, is a privately owned film studio founded as a leading-edge film production company specializing in the development of advanced integrated systems for high-resolution digital production utilizing virtual sets and locations, high frame rates, 3D, and advanced previsualization. Trumbull is presently developing multiple feature-film projects that he intends to write, produce, and direct using his virtual set technology.

"[Trumbull] is an amazing human being and one of the smartest people I will ever meet. And he is an artist to boot," Okun says.

Trumbull was touched by the news of his award. "It is truly an honor to receive the Georges Méliès Award from the Visual Effects Society," he says. "My philosophy is that everything in a movie is an illusion of some kind, and I am excited that the industry today is now embracing 3D, higher frame rates, and other opportunities that can expand the moviegoing experience, and deliver to audiences the kind of immersive and other-worldly images that we in the VES can provide. The role of the VES at this time could not be more important, and I am very grateful to receive this astonishing recognition." ●

10th Annual VES Awards Nominees

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Visual Effects-Driven Feature Motion Picture

Captain America: The First Avenger

Charlie Noble
Mark Soper
Christopher Townsend
Edson Williams

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2

Tim Burke
Emma Norton
John Richardson
David Vickery

Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides

Gary Brozenich
David Conley
Charlie Gibson
Ben Snow

Rise of the Planet of the Apes

Dan Lemmon
Joe Letteri
Cyndi Ochs
Kurt Williams

Transformers: Dark of the Moon

Scott Benza
Wayne Billheimer
Matthew Butler
Scott Farrar

Outstanding Supporting Visual Effects in a Feature Motion Picture

Anonymous

Andre Cantarel
Volker Engel
Rony Soussan
Marc Weigert

Hugo

Ben Grossmann
Alex Henning
Rob Legato
Karen Murphy

Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows

Laya Armian
Chas Jarrett
Seth Maury
Sirio Quintavalle

Source Code

Annie Godin
Louis Morin

War Horse

Duncan Burbidge
Ben Morris
Mike Mulholland
Chris Zeh

Outstanding Visual Effects in an Animated Feature Motion Picture

Arthur Christmas

Doug Ikeler
Chris Juen
Alan Short
Mandy Tankenson

Kung Fu Panda 2

Melissa Cobb
Alex Parkinson
Jennifer Yuh Nelson
Raymond Zibach

Puss In Boots

Joe Aguilar
Guillaume Aretos
Ken Bielenberg
Chris Miller

Rango

Tim Alexander
Hal Hickel
Jacqui Lopez
Katie Lynch

The Adventures of Tintin

Jamie Beard
Joe Letteri
Meredith Meyer-Nichols
Eileen Moran

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Broadcast Miniseries, Movie, or Special

Finding Life Beyond Earth

Simon Clarke
Hasraf Dulull
Vikas Gandhi
Francisco Lima

Gettysburg

J. David Everhart
Kent Johnson
Jon Rhinehardt
Jon Rosenthal

Inside the Human Body

Phil Dobree
Sophie Orde
Dan Upton

Prep & Landing: Naughty vs. Nice

Kevin Deters
Dorothy McKim
John Murrah
Stevie Wermers

The Bomber

Igor Gotsulyak
Dmitriy Kolesnik
Egor Olesov
Dmitriy Ovcharenko

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Broadcast Series

Falling Skies

Rob Biagi
Curt Miller
Andrew Orloff
Sean Tompkins

Fringe

Robert Habros
Andrew Orloff
Jay Worth
Chris Wright

Once Upon a Time

Laura Jones
Douglas Charles Ludwig
Andrew Orloff
Nate Overstrom

Planet Dinosaur

Phil Dobree
Luke Dodd
Haz Dulull
Mark Sherwood

Terra Nova

Kevin Blank
Colin Brady
Adica Manis
Jason Zimmerman

Outstanding Supporting Visual Effects in a Broadcast Program

Boardwalk Empire – Georgia Peaches

Richard Friedlander
Robert Stromberg
David Taritero

Bones – Tornado Case

Christian Cardona
Buddy Gheen
Beau Janzen
Andy Simonson

Breaking Bad – Face Off

Bruce Branit
Werner Hahnlein
Gregory Nicotero
William Powloski

Game of Thrones – Winter is Coming

Lucy Ainsworth-Taylor
Angela Barson
Ed Bruce
Adam McInnes

Pan Am – Pilot

Tavis Larkham
Chris Martin
Sam Nicholson
Matt Robken

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Live Action Commercial

Dior J'adore

Pascal Giroux
Julien Meesters
Stephane Pivron
Manuel Souillac

Jameson: Fire

Chris Bankoff
Dan Glass
Sascha M. Flick
Jeff Willette

Johnnie Walker: Rock Giant

Vincent Baertsoen
Camila de Biagi
Angus Kneale
Rob Petrie

Kia: Share Some Soul

Charles Abou Aad
Andy Boyd
Nordin Rahhali
Mike Wigart

Volkswagen: Hedgehog

Mhamed Elmezoued
Stephane Montel
Emilie Nicodex

Outstanding Visual Effects in an Animated Commercial or Video Game Trailer

Audi A6 Avant – Hummingbird

Tom Bussell
Hugo Guerra
Rahel Makonnen
Jorge Montiel

Coca-Cola Siege

Russell Dodgson
Simon French
Diarmid Harrison-Murray
Sarah Hiddlestone

Diablo III: The Black Soulstone

Nicholas S. Carpenter
Graham Cunningham
Chris Thunig
Taka Yasuda

Prey 2

Heikki Anttila
Brandon Riza
Al Shier
Dave Wilson

Sony: 2 Worlds

Melanie Larue
David Liu
Richard Morton

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Special Venue Project

Amazin'

Marc Rienzo
Eric Sanford
Lisa Zusmer Delprete

Humbled! Rockettes to the Rescue

Troy Griffin
Jasmine Johnson
Greg Lyons
Glo Minaya

Star Tours: The Adventure Continues

Bill George
Jeanie King
Glen McIntosh
Marianne McLean

Transformers the Ride: The Ultimate 3D Battle

Lori Arnold
Yanick Dusseault
Delio Tramontozzi
Jeff White

Typhoon 360

Peter Crosman
Seungyong Lee
Michael "oz" Smith
Brent Young

Outstanding Animated Character in a Live Action Feature Motion Picture

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2 – Ukranian Ironbelly

Yasunobu Arahori
Tom Bracht
Gavin Harrison
Chris Lentz

Paul – Paul

Anders Beer
Julian Foddy
Jody Johnson
David Lowry

Rise of the Planet of the Apes – Caesar

Daniel Barrett
Florian Fernandez
Matthew Muntean
Eric Reynolds

The Thing – Edvard/Adam

Lyndon Barrois
Fred Chapman
Greg Massie
Marco Menco

Outstanding Animated Character in an Animated Feature Motion Picture

Puss In Boots – Puss

Antonio Banderas
Ludovic Bouancheau
Laurent Caneiro
Olivier Staphylas

Rango – Rango

Frank Gravatt
Kevin Martel
Brian Paik
Steve Walton

Rio – Nigel

Diana Diriwaechter
Sang Jun Lee
Sergio Pablos
Aamir Tarin

The Adventures of Tintin – Tintin

Gino Acevedo
Gustav Ahren
Jamie Beard
Simon Clutterbuck

Outstanding Animated Character in a Broadcast Program or Commercial

Audi A6 Avant – Hummingbird

Tom Bussell
Jorge Montiel

Canal + – The Bear

Laurent Creusot
Guillaume Ho
Olivier Mitonneau
Michal Nauzin

Carls Jr. – Robot

Matt Heimlich
Fredd Hopp
Philip Ineno
Rob Ramsdell

Game of Thrones – Fire and Blood

Henry Badgett
Mark Brown
Rafael Morant
James Sutton

Outstanding Created Environment in a Live Action Feature Motion Picture

Anonymous – London

Andre Cantarel
Robert Freitag
Rony Soussan
Greg Straszc

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2: Hogwarts

Keziah Bailey
Stephen Ellis
Clement Gerard
Pietro Ponti

Thor – Heimdall's Observatory

Pierre Buffin
Audrey Ferrara
Yoel Godo
Dominique Vidal

Transformers: Dark of the Moon – 155 Wacker Drive

Giles Hancock
John Hanson
Tom Martinek
Scott Younkin

Outstanding Created Environment in an Animated Feature Motion Picture

Puss In Boots – The Cloud World

Guillaume Aretos
Greg Lev
Brett Miller
Peter Zaslav

Rango – Main Street Dirt

John Bell
Polly Ing
Martin Murphy
Russell Paul

The Adventures of Tintin – Bagghar

Hamish Beachman
Adam King
Wayne Stables
Mark Tait

The Adventures of Tintin – Docks

Matt Aitken
Jeff Capogregco
Jason Lazaroff
Alessandro Mozzato

The Adventures of Tintin – Pirate Battle

Phil Barrenger
Keith F. Miller
Alessandro Saponi
Christoph Sprenger

Outstanding Created Environment in a Broadcast Program or Commercial

Audi A6 Avant – Hummingbird

Amaan Akram
Tom Bussell
Alex Hammond

Boardwalk Empire – Two Boats and a Lifeguard

Matthew Conner
Robert Stromberg

Game of Thrones – The Icewall

Markus Kuha
Dante Harbridge Robinson
Damien Mac
Fani Vassiadi

Pan Am – Pilot Worldport Terminal

Bill Arance
Martin Hilke
Diego Galtieri
Anthony Ocampo

Terra Nova – Terra Nova

Michael Bozulich
Eric Hance
Kevin Kipper
David Morton

Outstanding Virtual Cinematography in a Live Action Feature Motion Picture**Hugo**

Martin Chamney
Rob Legato
Adam Watkins
Fabio Zangla

Rise of the Planet of the Apes

Thelvin Cabezas
Mike Perry
R. Christopher White
Erik Winquist

Thor

Xavier Allard
Pierre Buffin
Nicolas Chevallier

Transformers: Dark of the Moon

Michael Balog
Richard Bluff
Shawn Kelly
Jeff White

Outstanding Virtual Cinematography in an Animated Feature Motion Picture**Arthur Christmas**

Michael Ford
David Morehead
Emi Tahira

Cars 2

Mahyar Aboosaeedi
Sharon Calahan
Jeremy Lasky
Jonathan Pytko

Rango

Colin Benoit
Philippe Rebours
Nelson Sepulveda
Nick Walker

The Adventures of Tintin

Matt Aitken
Matthias Menz
Keith F. Miller
Wayne Stables

Outstanding Virtual Cinematography in a Broadcast Program or Commercial**Gears of War 3 – Dust to Dust**

Niles Heckman
Richard Morton
Vernon Wilbert Jr.

Ghost Recon – Future Soldier “Camo Up”

David Liu

Mattel: Hot Wheels

Steve Beck
Robert Sethi
Feliz Urquiza

Once Upon A Time – Cinderella’s Courtyard

Stephen Jackson
Salyanne Massimini
Nathan Matsuda
Kevin Struckman

Outstanding Models in a Feature Motion Picture**Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2 – Hogwarts School Buildings**

Steven Godfrey
Pietro Ponti
Tania Marie Richard
Andy Warren

Hugo – Train Crash

Scott Beverly
Allan Faucher
Forest P. Fischer
Matthew Gratzner

Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol – Parking Garage

John Goodson
Russell Paul
Kristian Pedlow
Vick Schutz

Transformers: Dark of the Moon – Driller

Tim Brakensiek
Kelvin Chu
David Fogler
Rene Garcia

Outstanding Models in a Broadcast Program or Commercial**Arrowhead Nature’s Fix**

Carl Horner
Ian Hunter
Miyo Nakamura
Hayley O’Neil

Boardwalk Empire

Matthew Conner
Eran Dinur
David Reynolds
Szymon Weglarski

Falling Skies

Jon Chesson
Steve Graves
Michael Kirylo
Renaud Talon

Once Upon A Time

Michael Kirylo
Jeremy Michael Melton
Jason O. Monroe
Chris Strauss

Outstanding Compositing in a Feature Motion Picture**Captain America: The First Avenger**

Casey Allen
Trent Claus
Brian Hajek
Cliff Welsh

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2

Michele Benigna
Martin Ciastko
Thomas Dyg
Andy Robinson

Rise of the Planet of the Apes

Jean Luc Azzis
Quentin Hema
Simon Jung
Christoph Salzmann

Transformers: Dark of the Moon

Chris Balog
Ben O’Brien
Amy Shepard
Jeff Sutherland

Outstanding Compositing in a Broadcast Program or Commercial**Any World: Jeep Call of Duty MWF3**

Jason Bergman
Steve Meyer
Peter Sidoriak

Boardwalk Empire – Gimcrack & Bunkum

Anton Dawson
Eran Dinur
Austin Meyers
David Reynolds

Channel 4 – Street Summer

Stirling Archibald
Anthony Bloor
Michael Gregory
Giacomo Mineo

DirectTV – Hot House

Franck Lambertz

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Student Project**a.maize**

Roman Kaelin
Falko Paepfer
Florian Wittmann

Aquatic Bloom

Susie Hong
Bokyeong Kim

Defective Detective

Avner Geller
Stevie Lewis

Hai Hase

Florian Greth
Julia Reck

Renee the Movie

Syrena Edmonds
Zack Heimbegner
Brian Mullen
Nathaniel Skinner

We Miss You

Jann Doeppert Hannah
Tonio Freitag
Hannah Maria Heidrich
Sebastian Nozon

Recognizing NEW TALENT



PICTURES © KEVIN SHARP.

Winners of the VES student award are introduced to industry luminaries throughout their visit, and at the awards event, they are seated with well-known VFX practitioners.

The Visual Effects Society, through its annual VES Awards, has been recognizing the magic—whether it’s in movies, television, games, or other types of entertainment-related projects—as well as the people behind that magic. In addition, the VES presents honorary awards each year to industry visionaries who have had a dramatic impact on the industry.

In 2008, the VES gave Steven Spielberg one of those honorary recognitions, the Lifetime Achievement Award. During his acceptance speech, the legendary filmmaker challenged the VES and the audience to foster the next generation of talent and recognize the work of student artists/filmmakers. In essence, Spielberg threw down the gauntlet during his acceptance speech in terms of a call to action. While appreciative of his award, the filmmaker expressed concern over what the industry was doing about the filmmakers of tomorrow, that enough was not being done to recognize these newcomers.

That was just the nudge that everyone needed. “The VES has been dedicated to getting the student award going for a long time,” says Jeffrey Okun, chair of the Visual Effects Society. “Steven challenged us to do this, and our friends at Autodesk jumped to the challenge and came aboard as well.”

“It got us thinking, and we absolutely shared [Spielberg’s] point of view about the future of filmmaking, that this craft is relevant and interesting, and that we needed to make sure there is new blood coming in,” says Stig Gruman, vice president of Autodesk Media & Entertainment’s Digital

Entertainment Group. “We effectively picked up the gauntlet, and we proposed to the VES that we would like to sponsor a student award. They thought it was a great idea and entirely in line with Steven Spielberg’s call to action.”

Fast-forward one year later to the 2009 VES Awards, where the Visual Effects Society handed out the first student award—Outstanding Visual Effects in a Student Project—sponsored exclusively by Autodesk. Recipients Sandy Widyayana and Courtney Wise were presented the award for their short film “Plastic,” which they created as a graduation project at the Australian Film Television and Radio School. (See “Past Winners,” page 16.)

At the presentation, a videotaped message from Spielberg was played. In it, he said: "Last year when I received the Lifetime Achievement Award, I challenged [the VES] to recognize the amazing work being done by students in the field of visual effects. So I could not be possibly prouder today that they have joined with Autodesk to step up, making the student award a reality for the first time. I congratulate Autodesk, the VES, and, most importantly, the students, because they are the future."

Building Momentum

Autodesk has worked with the VES in spreading the word about this award while actively seeking submissions. For instance, the society has posted information on its Web site and has contacted hundreds of educational institutions it has relationships with, while Autodesk has done likewise on its AREA community Web site and social media properties. Furthermore, Autodesk is extremely active in the education realm—with various events, outreach to educational institutions, and free three-year Autodesk software licensing agreements for student users for home and personal use—so information invariably gets to students.

"The student award is building a reputation and is known, and the education institutions are self-motivating the students," says Gruman. "It also reflects well for the education institutions as well as the students if they start seeing winners from their schools."

For students, simply getting nominated, let alone winning, is a wonderful opportunity for industry-wide recognition. "It is an amazing entry into their portfolio," notes Gruman. "The VES is a high-profile organization, and receiving the award gives students a tremendous advantage



in terms of a head start toward a long-term career in the industry."

As Okun notes, "This is the opportunity for young artists to put their work in front of the leaders in the visual effects field." More to the point, he adds: "In order to get a job in this industry, you need to get your work seen. Even if it is only shortlisted or nominated, there's a feather in your cap right there."

Unlike the winners of the other VES Awards, which are not announced until the night of the event, the student award winners are notified in advance, giving them ample time to schedule the trip. The winners are invited to the awards ceremony, with one complimentary airfare given as part of the award. When they arrive, they are introduced to numerous studio executives and directors throughout the week as well as during the event.

"We [Autodesk and the VES] organize a series of interviews and meet-

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ings with industry luminaries," Gruman says. "[The students] get an opportunity to rub shoulders with some of the most creative minds in the industry and make fantastic contacts, and get an up-close and personal view of the industry and the people in it." The students also have the opportunity to visit a local VFX facility, and receive a free Autodesk software license—the full Entertainment Creation Suite Premium version.

At the awards event, the students are seated with well-known names in the industry, and introductions are made throughout the evening. "[Widyanata and Wise, the first recipients] used their time to make the rounds and meet as many people as they could, to get the feel of the industry," Okun says. "It was a win-win for both sides. They were stunningly delightful!"

As Gruman points out, the number of people the winners meet with in one room in one night is astounding for a student. Moreover, to have the award as a calling card is a fantastic opportunity for someone just starting out in the industry. "It's a great life experience," he adds.

As for the industry, this type of award "makes the industry relevant, interesting, and a wonderful ecosystem to be part of," says Gruman. "We all know some of the challenges that the effects industry is facing, and it's important that we continue participating and showcasing what a creative and wonderful business this is."

Raising the Bar

When Widyanata and Wise received the first VES Student Award, they established a high bar for subsequent entries. As Gruman notes, the

quality level of the submissions gets higher and higher each year, making it more difficult selecting a winner. "The VES is receiving some really beautiful work," he says.

Okun agrees that each year the submissions are getting better. In 2009, the challenge was to include the visual effects into a finished story. The following year, the judges were looking for well-executed shots. Now, the standard has been raised even further. The winning pieces, three thus far, are accessible to others for viewing, and those projects have become the new standard for subsequent entrants.

As Gruman points out, it is important that all project submissions be innovative, creative, and original.

The competition is open to students around the world attending a recognized school, and submissions indeed have been sent from the four corners of the globe. The students are required to provide a maximum of two minutes of a media project containing visual effects—for instance, visual effects sequences, short films, and so forth—created while they were in school the calendar year prior to the awards night. The submissions are then reviewed by a voting panel at Autodesk, with the top 10 sent to the VES, where they are narrowed further by a panel to the top five, with the winning entry chosen by VES members worldwide.

And despite the fact that Autodesk is sponsoring the award, there is no requirement that the company's products be used to create the project. "Across the board, the tools, not just those from Autodesk, are getting easier to use and more sophisticated," says Gruman. "So while a student may spend the same amount of time working on a project, what they are able to do is growing exponentially, and the interoperability and standardization across the tool sets have been changing and improving. It's now much less about the tools and more about the creativity of the individual using those tools."

"We don't sponsor a lot of awards, but this is one we feel strongly about as a company," says Gruman. "What these artists are able to accomplish at a younger and younger age is quite impressive." ●

Past Winners

2009: Sandy Widyanata and Courtney Wise (from the Australian Film Television and Radio School) for their short film "Plastic." The live-action short focuses on the obsession for the perfect body image, and is supported by animation and visual effects.

2010: Thilo Ewers (from Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg in Germany) for his film "They Will Come to Town." Inspired by a photo of the Brooklyn Bridge, his project delves into the meaning of environment and global warming.

2011: Jan Bitzer, Ilija Brunck, Csaba Letay, Fabian Pross, and Regina Welker (from Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg in Germany) for their film "LOOM." The short incorporates breathtaking computer graphics to weave the tale of a moth stuck in a tangled web as a spider readies to attack.

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