

Long Critique of Team 1's animated pitch

by Lanz Singbeil (lws2)

I'm glad you are already starting to talk about the technical issues related to cloud and rain effects. Last semester I worked with particles for 343 (as some of you may have for your dynamics piece) and you may be familiar with the issue of hardware vs. software rendering. Try as much as possible to keep it to software rendering! I looked at the smoke system Maya has and it is pretty interesting. You can cycle through sprite images as they are emitted which gives you a lot of variety (so long as you are willing to make all the sprites) But the downside is that both it and the rain particles you would probably want to use would end up needing to be hardware rendered but do they even need to be a particle system? For the rain maybe it would save you render time if it was an animated texture. Or you could pre-render the rain and post-produce the same rain in every time. You definitely don't need to use the built in lightning for the lightning effect, just You could actually hand model the bolt and apply a glow effect or you could use a texture and just make it fade in and then out really fast with a big change in lighting.

Some strong modeling ability demonstrated in building the city but be careful that you don't bite off more than you can chew. Depending on your style the city could stay non-textured as silhouettes or outlines but, once you get into having to texture, the work will start piling up. We're going to have to deal with texturing a lot in my team's project as well and we are a bit worried so we are focusing a lot of our time over the break looking into the pipeline.

Why not have it be a small road running horizontally and a path leading up to a single house on a hill? The city doesn't seem deeply connected to the sky stuff so is it really important to the narrative?

Also, do you need more than one car in the streets? Better question is do you have TIME? Why don't you turn it into a plot device that simultaneously saves you work? If you had just one really cute volkswagen beetle that whenever it starts raining just happens to go by and splash water on the guy that'd be easier and funny too especially if when it switches back and forth really fast he gets completely drenched (although how you pull off him being soaking wet might be a bit of a challenge).

I heard you mentioned fog affects. I used those extensively last semester in our animation LUX and they can be dangerous to your rendering times if you aren't careful. For no reason should you turn on falloff (which makes the fog fade with distance) because it will increase your rendering time by hours. Another issue is trying to get the fog to be semi-occluded where it isn't just a conic shape but has some object blocking a portion of the light. This actually doesn't work in Maya; the fog will go through the object. If you want occlusion or just better control with safer render times perhaps consider using polygons and mapping a gradient of transparency. You could then animate or even rig the meshes and have really precise light beams (of course they won't be actually casting any light so you'll have to add lamps as well).

I sifted through your team pages and noticed you do have someone on lighting which is good. Perhaps having one team member solely work on lighting and another just work on the cloud affects will produce something really nice in the end.

You are a big team, so although I am worried about how you have three characters that are fully rigged and also have facial animation, I think it shouldn't be impossible to do. Think about ways you can save time. Can you model and rig a base mesh then edit the polygons two different ways to create your two spirits? Could all three characters be done this way? Also, how can you use the style of the film to save you time? In the right style, the eyes could be simple black dots and the hair could be thick polygons. The style also changes how the animation is dealt with. You'll probably want to avoid actual contact between characters (I wouldn't DREAM of doing a grappling/wrestling sort of thing in this class) Maybe just stick with throwing energy at each other.

The story is cute and there's a lot for you guys to work with. I think I'll enjoy this one and I look forward to seeing how you pull off the cool effects.

Best of Luck,
- Lanz S.