Long Critique of Team 7's animated pitch

by Lanz Singbeil (lws2)

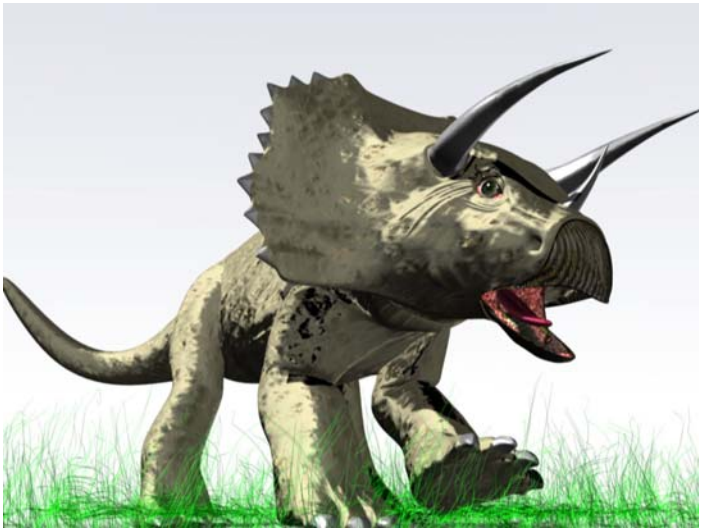
I was honestly surprised halfway through when you brought in these other perspectives. My first thought was "don't do them, its enough work as it is". Why do you need all the other dinosaurs? Just have the little ones! They could be smaller versions of the T-Rex with a different texture and you've just saved yourself a ton of work.

If you had time though, it'd be cool to do the Stegosaurus perspective. I think it would add well to the narrative but you'd probably want to adjust it a bit...maybe you could have him be struggling to get to the place on time but when he finally gets there you could have it explode. Or maybe he thinks the explosion is part of the present? Stegosauruses are quite dumb after all. You could have him get covered in cake stuff as the T-Rex flies out of the volcano, landing at the stegosauruses feet feeling embarrassed. Then the stegosaurus starts clapping or something because he actually thought it was great. Still only deal with the stegosaurus if you have time. You have enough content just inside the volcano with the T-Rex and smaller dinosaurs.

That being said, I'd rather see a high degree of polish with a shorter animation and with fewer characters even though your team is quite large you can use that size to increase the quality rather than the amount of content.

The reason why I think there's enough just in the volcano is that you are having a lot of collision detection as well as picking objects up not to mention doing all this with non-human characters. Start looking into the physics system in Maya ASAP. An effective way to do the collisions is to parent some bounding boxes around parts of the dinosaur you want to register and then, when you animate, Maya can use those bounds for collision against objects.

Now let's talk about modeling dinosaurs. Believe it or not I've actually done a triceratops model myself and rigged it as well (I did this in Blender but the concepts are pretty similar). Here's a shot of the model:



Although it isn't 100% accurate and the rigging still needs work it took me a ridiculous amount of time to do. My approach was to take some reference images and do it by eye. Alternatively you could use the planar views and paste the images into Maya. I looked at the skeletal structure from the beginning which really helped determine some of the meshes details. Bones are probably the best reference you are going to get being as you can find a variety of images of complete skeletons for probably all the dinosaurs you want to model. But after a point you really just have to guess. The bones won't tell you everything. There are also little details that add a lot of hours such as the mouth and teeth which were really frustrating to work

with, sometimes I felt like I was a dentist performing some sort of dangerous and stressful surgery. I think you need to decide your style early on because it will definitely increase or decrease modeling time. How detailed are your models going to be? How detailed are the textures going to be? Maybe even make a poly-count limit.

I wouldn't even TRY animating my model I'd probably lose my sanity. That's sort of my point. Rigging and animating are probably going to be your worst enemies, especially if you are dealing with Quadra-pedal dinosaurs with reverse kneecaps. That's why I really don't think that having a large variety of dinosaurs is doable in the time we have.

I'll be happy with whatever you guys manage to pull off, I like dinosaurs too. Good luck in the months ahead.

One thing I'm a bit confused about is that on one of your team member's pages they say there is going to be flash integration of the 3d to allow for interaction. If this is old and you've actually changed your idea since then (which seems to be the case) Justin should consider updating his individual page.

Cheers,
- Lanz S.