

Visualising



Cinesite UK is one of the largest full-service visual effects and post-production facilities in the world. A wholly-owned subsidiary of Kodak, Cinesite provides services as diverse as digital effects, physical effects, model construction and unit photography, film scanning, laser recording and visual effects supervision. But how and when did Cinesite start? And, more importantly, where is it now heading?

"Cinesite in the UK was set up in 1993," states Courtney Vanderslice, Production Director. "We were one of the original instigators of feature film digital effects, certainly in the UK market, and were always known for the quality of the work we were doing. Originally, we were renowned for our compositing and in-depth colour science knowledge. In late 2005 we expanded to build a strong 3D and creative team at Cinesite, with visual effects artists from all over the world and have been developing our reputation in this area slowly but surely since then. In 2006 we tested our mettle on *The Golden Compass*, creating photorealistic animals; with the BAFTA and Oscar that were awarded for visual effects on

this film, we knew we were on the right track. More recently in 2008, we created all of the visual effects, including highly realistic 3D work for HBO's *Generation Kill*, which has been nominated for two Visual Effects Society Awards. We are also currently working on a key sequence from *Clash of The Titans*, which has character animation and major 3D content. So all in all, the strategy for us to continue to develop the 3D side of our business has proved a very successful one."

Transition

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Cinesite has played a major role in Kodak's transition from film to digital, and this is particularly evident in their highly successful imaging department, which supplies scanning and recording to international productions. The company's Image Science boffins,

working closely with Kodak, developed an innovative system called Super 2K that can take film scanned at 4K then run it through a sub-sampling algorithm where it is brought down to 2K, which

package. We've got a miniatures division based at Shepperton Studios who build practical miniatures such as Hogwarts in the Harry Potter films or the Houses of Parliament in *V for Vendetta*.

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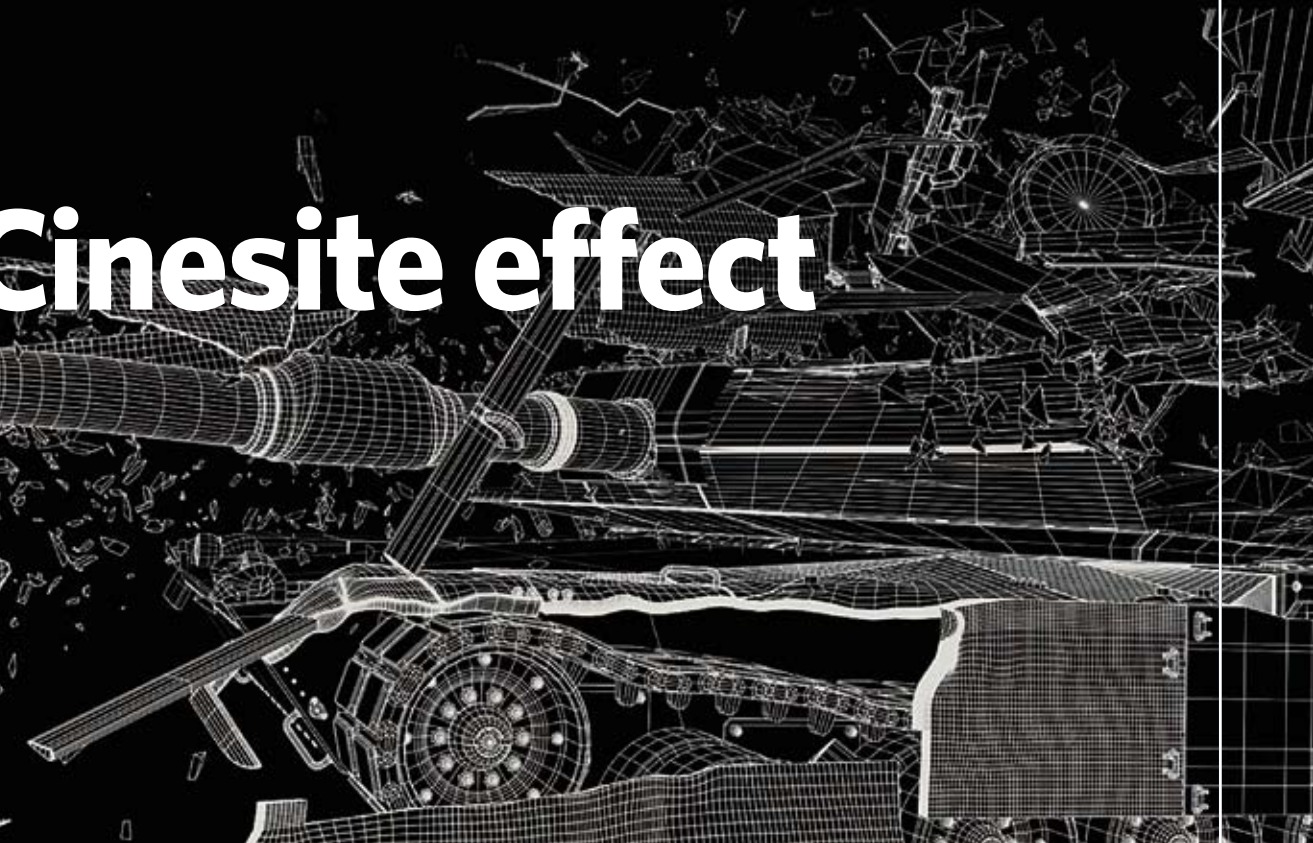
makes it much easier to manage whilst supplying maximum image quality. This system is now world-standard, and the quality of Cinesite's Scanning and Recording is seen as the benchmark for other services all over the world. Recent innovations include the addition of infrared scanning to enable automatic scratch and dust fixing and the ability to scan archive film with perforation shrinkage.

Visual Effects Supervisor Matt Johnson, who was Cinesite's Supervisor for last year's Disney release *Bedtime Stories*, expands on this point. "Another advantage that Cinesite UK has is that we are the only facility in Europe that can approach visual effects as a total

We also have Effects Associates who create practical effects like rain, snow and explosions. We're a one-stop shop and this makes us different from anyone else; we offer creative solutions."

"I have had the benefit of a Film School background and this gives me an advantage," continued Matt. "The ability to think of things as they're shot by a cameraman and appreciate nuances like colour space, depth of field, and focus is invaluable. It's no good creating amazing VFX if they don't match; the audience has to feel its part of the same thing. It's important to stress that VFX is a highly creative business; it's not just about computers and mathematics.

the Cinesite effect



We are very lucky in that we have some imaginative artists here from all over the world and I'm continually amazed by the things they do."

Antony Hunt, Managing Director of Cinesite says, "Productions are becoming more and more adventurous in their ideas; our job is to make the impossible possible and affordable to what is now a truly global industry. We cultivate an environment that is relaxed but inspires creativity and professionalism, this adds an extra dynamic to what we are able to achieve. Technology is constantly changing and we are at the forefront, adapting and growing with it. It is a very exciting time."

"Cinesite is at the cutting edge of special effects," agrees Matt. "Every film we work on gives us a new challenge and we have to figure out how we are going to meet that, whether it's writing bespoke new codes, taking new techniques or employing new systems. The analogy I like to use is that we're a shark; if we stop swimming, we die."

Transatlantic portal

George Bernard Shaw famously described England and America as two countries divided by a common language. He would have to eat his words if he were able to see the data transfer service that operates between Cinesite London and a satellite suite at Kodak's Laser Pacific in Los Angeles as this ensures that the two countries not only talk in a common language but can actually interact with identical shots simultaneously.

With a highly experienced Visual Effects Supervisor and Co-Ordinator on hand in the Los Angeles suite, clients can experience synchronised dailies sessions as though they were actually sitting in the London suite. Current versions of sequences can be viewed and feedback given which is instantly transferred into Cinesite's in-house production tracking system ready for updates and changes to begin at the start of the UK working day. This system allows for both a greater amount of creative control for clients based in the US and more efficient use of the full 24 hours in a day.

Colour management, data management and production scheduling systems have all been matched and synchronised between the two locations, ensuring a seamless creative dialogue between visual teams interacting in the two locations.

Services

- High-speed, full 2K quality, rapid, secure, private data link between London and Los Angeles
- Dailies sessions at the Los Angeles suite, viewing shots in progress at Cinesite in London
- A London-based portal into full Laser Pacific services in Los Angeles
- A Los Angeles based portal into full Cinesite services in London
- Shots can be viewed in Los Angeles either digitally or, if previously transferred, filmed out and printed at Laser Pacific to view on film



3



4