

press release

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Lucasfilm Standardizes On SpeedTree® For Vegetation Modeling

USED IN AVATAR, MULTIPLE IN-PRODUCTION LUCASFILM PROJECTS

COLUMBIA, SC – Following its successful use in *Avatar*, SpeedTree® has been licensed by Lucasfilm Ltd. for projects underway in both their San Francisco and Singapore studios.

“SpeedTree was simply the best choice for our work on *Avatar*. It’s as simple as that,” said Richard Bluff, Digital Matte department Supervisor at Industrial Light & Magic (ILM). SpeedTree was chosen by ILM late in the production of *Avatar*, Mr. Bluff recalled, and the technology proved invaluable for quickly creating the otherworldly forests in virtually all of ILM’s shots. SpeedTree is in use in a number of other ILM productions, all at present unannounced.

The decision to go with SpeedTree for *Avatar* was made almost instantly during the evaluation of the software in late spring of 2009, Mr. Bluff said. “I knew within 15 minutes that this was what we were looking for. The choice to use SpeedTree was never questioned.”

After SpeedTree was licensed, ILM artists quickly put it to work to match the precise vision of *Avatar* creator and director James Cameron, Mr. Bluff said. “In one morning, one of our artists used SpeedTree to model 40 different trees.”

“We were able to manipulate our trees to the exact specifications of a film where literally every scene had been meticulously pre-visualized by Mr. Cameron’s team,” noted Mr. Bluff. “In the past, we’d never been able to control down to a leaf or a twig, where with SpeedTree we could.”

Mr. Cameron was very happy with the results, Mr. Bluff reports, noting that when he presented a flyover of the planet Pandora, a hush fell over the screening room. “The first thing Mr. Cameron wanted to know was ‘how are you doing your trees?’” recalled Mr. Bluff. “He was shocked at the match to his original vision.”

That initial footage ended up comprising the first 23 seconds of *Avatar*, which was released in December 2009 and became the first (and to date, the only) movie to earn \$2 billion in box office revenue. The movie was nominated for nine Oscar® Awards from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, and won three, for Art Direction, Cinematography, and Visual Effects.

Key features of SpeedTree, along with its ability to quickly and precisely model a wide range of vegetation, are its ease of use and its generation of additional varieties of a species through a randomized seed, said Mr. Bluff. “Our old methodology of doing trees was never going to work. When we looked at SpeedTree, we felt it would give us all the control we would ever want, and then some.”

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*Richard Bluff
CG Department Supervisor,
Digital Matte
Industrial Light & Magic*

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Richard Kerris, Chief Technology Officer for Lucasfilm, described SpeedTree as ILM's "new vegetation solution company-wide." Added Mr. Kerris, "within days of downloading the software, we were using SpeedTree to create incredible environments for the scenes we were working on."

Kerris also offered praise for SpeedTree's cost effectiveness and follow through. "We had exacting specifications to meet and very little time," he said. "SpeedTree's software and support were up to the task and we're thrilled at the results we were able to achieve in such a short period of time."

SpeedTree was introduced by Interactive Data Visualization in 2002 and has been used in countless video games and other real-time applications, but the prominent use of SpeedTree in *Avatar* marked another turning point for the technology, said IDV President Michael Sechrest. "Use of SpeedTree at any Lucasfilm division is deeply gratifying," said Mr. Sechrest. "So to have our vegetation chosen at multiple locations is a huge win and the strongest endorsement we could ask for."

The SpeedTree® line of award-winning virtual vegetation products includes SpeedTree Cinema and SpeedTree for real-time games and other applications. Developed by Interactive Data Visualization, Inc., SpeedTree offers graphical beauty and realism, natural wind effects and a modeling tool that delivers a unique combination of procedural and hand modeling options. Winner of the 2005 Front Line Award for middleware, the real-time version of SpeedTree delivers seamless LOD transitions, an array of lighting, physics & wind effects, and an SDK programmed to support any level of engine integration.

Interactive Data Visualization, Inc. (IDV) develops software products with a focus on real-time three dimensional applications for the animation, game development, visual simulation, and animation industries. IDV, a privately held corporation, was founded in 1999 in Columbia, South Carolina. For more information about IDV, visit www.idvinc.com. IDV's SpeedTree line, first released in 2002, includes an award-winning real-time version that dominates the worldwide game development industry. Many recent games, from console blockbusters to celebrated online role-playing games, have made prominent use of SpeedTree.

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