The evolution of the 3D industry

How to survive?

Insightful discussion with 3D experts on the future of the industry.

A recent panel discussion hosted by Autodesk brought together five accomplished computer graphics professionals representing differing factions of the 3D industry. Among the topics debated was the impact of changing technologies and business models on the ability of studios to survive.

Representing the video game industry was Luc Duchaine, director of communications at Ubisoft, Montreal. He was joined by Pierre Couture, workstation sales specialist at Hewlett-Packard Canada, Montreal; Peter Skovsbo, VFX producer at Digital Dimension, Montreal; Darren Cranford, producer, director, and co-founder at Keyframe Digital Productions in Ontario; and Joe Gunn, freelance VFX artist based in New York. Collectively, the panel represented over five decades of award-winning creative and technical expertise in 3D production.

As might be expected from such a diverse group, opinions varied on a number of topics, but most panelists agreed that fresh business models were needed to ensure that graphics studios received the cash flow to stay in business and advance the art. It was noted, with some irony, that winning an Oscar®* for best visual effects could mean the demise of the winning graphics studio due to the enormous resources expended to create the award-winning effects. It was the panel's consensus that wider

*Oscar is a registered trademark of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

recognition by the large movie studios for the work produced by the smaller VFX houses was long overdue.

Panelists agreed that technology has radically shaped the industry. Powered by accessible software and hardware, creative small shops and design boutiques challenge the big studio model of working. Panelists also emphasized that the artists remain the primary drivers of creative and innovative work.

Other topics in the discussion included advice for new college graduates entering the 3D industry ("be a generalist first, a specialist later") and the power of the current off-the-shelf tools, as opposed to custom tools, to advance the art in 3D.

WATCH FULL DISCUSSION:

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