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THE MAGAZINE FOR 3D ARTISTS



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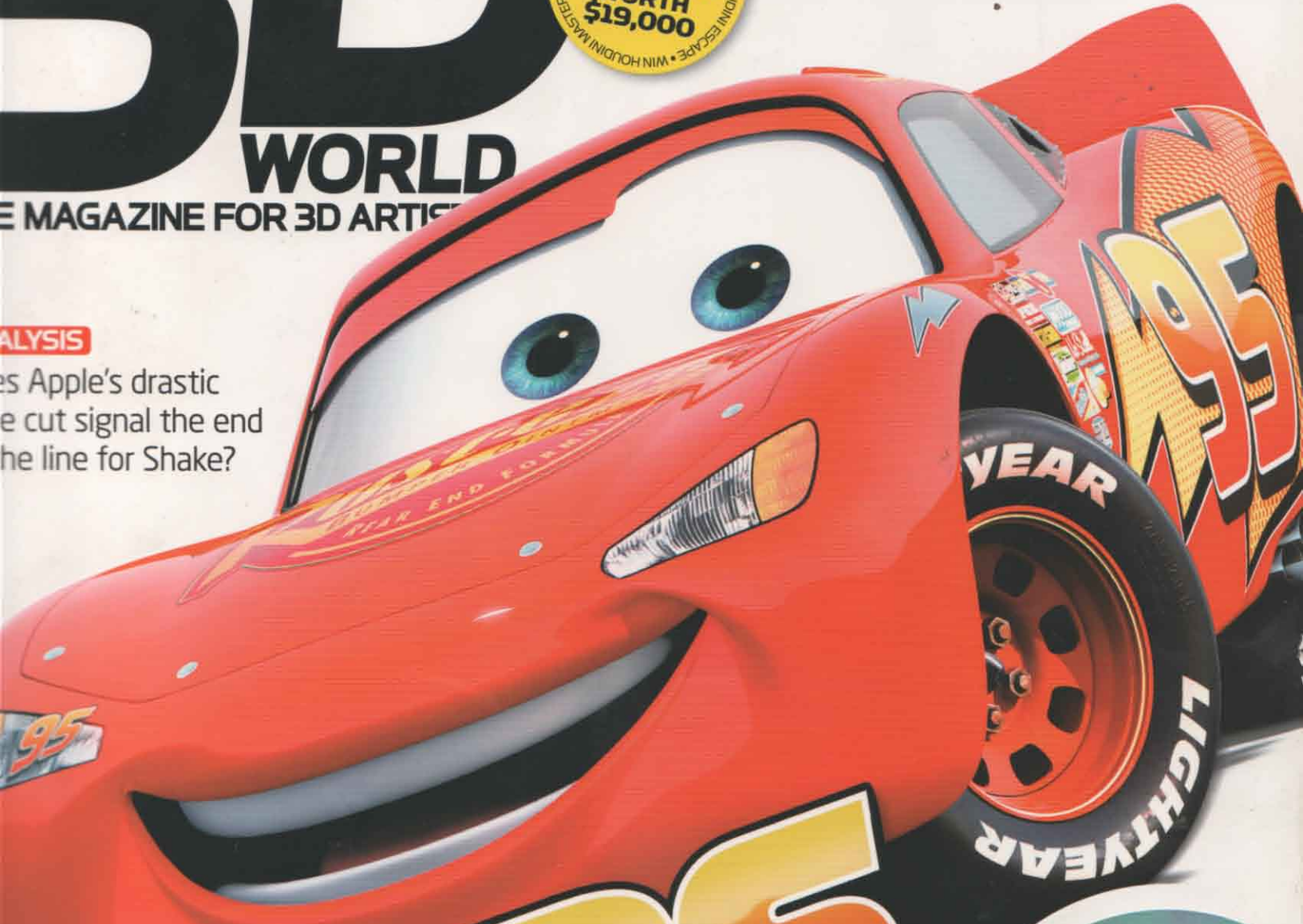
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01:42 What's bugging the Devil? Because of the complexity of most scenes, elements had to be rendered separately and then composited in *Shake*

05:00 The Devil's blind date reveals herself. To his delight, she's a real looker!



SHOWREEL

MY DATE FROM HELL

BY TIM WEIMANN AND TOM BRACHT

The Devil moves into his Viagra years, hoping to find the right girl to make his life complete, in this clever and atmospheric short from two graduates of Germany's Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg



THE PITCH

SYNOPSIS

Can the Devil find the girl of his dreams and cure his midlife crisis?

LOOK OUT FOR

- 00:00** Great sets establish the Hell setting right from the start
- 01:00** The Devil no longer in disguise
- 02:20** Wilber builds a set
- 02:49** Hell's kitchen
- 03:45** Dreaded middle-aged spread has set in
- 05:00** The Devil looks hot as he meets his first date

SEE ALSO

- *Shrek* (2001) PDI/DreamWorks
- *Annie & Boo* (2003) Johannes Weiland

Have pity on poor Beelzebub. Fat and complacent, and bored with the daily pressures of running the underworld, he's convinced that finding Ms Right is the cure for his ennui. But the Devil discovers that blind dates, personal ads and video dating are simply pitfalls along a road paved with good intentions; or so we learn in *My Date from Hell*, a short from German artists Tim Weimann and Tom Bracht.

The pair created the film over four and a half years while at European film school Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg. "The story was inspired by a German radio show about the Devil," explains Weimann. "Although the show made fun of him, it was clear he was still a nasty creature. We wanted to do something similar, but totally change his character so that he wouldn't fit

the typical Devil stereotype any more. We wanted our Devil to be a genuinely nice guy."

SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

In telling the story of Satan's midlife crisis, Weimann and Bracht swam against the current tide of animation that seems to favour overblown, melodramatic films. Instead, they opted for humor: "Our main aim was to make a funny film that the audience would enjoy. Profound, melancholic short animations are great, but when we attend festivals, we love seeing the films which make us laugh."

When they sat down to design the look of the film, the two artists went straight to their influences. Bracht explains that, like many animators, he and Weimann are fans of the stylized, quirky look of Tim Burton's work. "[Burton] really started a complete new animation genre with his films," he says. "You'll find several visual quotations of his work in our film." In fact, you don't have to look too hard to see the influence. Even in the film's opening sequence, the chunky stone forms, complete with Gothic curls cut into them, evoke Burton's flair for playful linear design. Yet it's the spiral lampposts in the park scene near the end of the film that are probably the clearest homage.

In addition, Weimann admits to being a big fan of French comic artists. In particular, he credits Olivier Vatine, the creator of *Aquablue*, as his earliest influence. As a youth, he copied Vatine's drawings and tried to mimic that style.



◆ Exuding a devil-may-care attitude on the dancefloor



05:18 "Allow me to introduce myself." The Devil's just a middle-aged man having a midlife crisis after all

09:28 This shot evokes *Shrek* and Johannes Weiland's *Annie & Boo*



RESUMÉ

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Tim Weimann

AGE
29

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CAREER HISTORY

- 2006-current Animation Director, Parasol Island, Düsseldorf
- 2001-2005 Studied 3D Animation, Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg
- 1998-2001 3D Artist, Das Werk in Munich and Düsseldorf



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- 2000-2006 Studied Film and Media, Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg
- 1999-2000 Student, University of Cologne
- 1995-1999 3D Artist, Step-Ani-Motion, Cologne
- 1994-1995 Intern, Step-Ani-Motion, Cologne

Once the artists had identified the look and feel of the film and its characters, they moved on to the narrative structure. Working from their first version of the script, they storyboarded the whole film and created a Leica reel in *After Effects*. Next, they recorded the soundtrack, created rough versions of the sets and characters, and made a 3D animatic to help them finalise the camera moves and staging. Team member Patrick Wachowiak built a camera rig that imitated a real one, so that the camera moves remained believable.

LIFE IN HELL

The team spent the first three years of the project getting ready to animate - building and texturing the characters, building rigs, identifying a production pipeline and solving problems. In order to have fast interaction while animating, they built and used lo-res proxy versions of the characters, and wrote a MEL script to swap the visibility of the lo-res and hi-res versions as necessary.

Early on, the team ran into a problem with the Devil's hair. They discovered that, without curly chest hair and satyr fur, the character was just too cute. They tried Maya Fur, but it had problems on the render farm. They tried *PRMan*, but without someone well-versed in *RenderMan* shaders, they weren't able to achieve the correct look. Finally, they turned to *Shave and a Haircut*, and the third time was the charm. "It's a really nice plug-in that has its own renderer," says Weimann. "And, like Maya, layers the fur on top of the normal rendered images."

Nevertheless, the plug-in had its drawbacks. For instance, it didn't play well with volumetric lights used to create atmosphere. In the end, Weimann and Bracht simply rendered the characters in a separate pass, lighting them with standard spotlights to match the background plate.

"PROFOUND, MELANCHOLIC, SHORT ANIMATIONS ARE GREAT, BUT WE ALWAYS LOVE TO SEE FILMS THAT MAKE US LAUGH" **TIM WEIMANN, DIRECTOR**

To achieve the look they were after, they hand-painted light and shade into the character's textures, highlighting certain areas and darkening the crevices to simulate bounced light. Weimann admits they could have done this with an ambient occlusion pass, but he suggests the result wouldn't have offered the same 'handmade' appearance.

Since completing the short, the pair have moved on to prestigious animation jobs. Weimann is currently Animation Director for Düsseldorf-based film production studio, Parasol Island, while Bracht works for Studio SOI in Ludwigsburg as a character rigger, and expects to move to its UK-based sister company as Character Technical Director.

As for what's next, don't look for another short like this one anytime soon. "My Date from Hell took us over four years to finish! At the moment, we're quite happy to work on commercials, as they don't take long to make!"

WATCH THE MOVIE

You can see a five-minute excerpt from *My Date from Hell* in the Animations section of the *3D World* website at www.3dworldmag.com



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