FMX 2024: Highlights (selection)

CONNECTING IDEAS

KEYNOTE: Sol Rogers, Magnopus
Addressing this year's FMX theme, Program Chair **Sol Rogers** will talk about building new technologies that are open source. These technologies will allow media creators to build new worlds, collaboratively, across platforms, pipelines, and distances. Ben is the founder of Magnopus. They have supported some of the most spectacular Hollywood imagery of the past years with bespoke technology, like the photo-real but entirely computer-animated remake of Disney's LION KING.

DEVELOPING OPEN STANDARDS FOR THE METAVERSE: Web 4.0 and virtual worlds – the EU strategy
This track explores the integration of open standards in the 3D internet. Discussions feature Europe's user-centric metaverse approach, AI in storytelling and gaming, and web browsers' role in 3D. Speakers include **Neal Stephenson**, **Patrick Cozzi** (Cesium)**, Anne Bajart** (European Commission), and experts from Google, ThatOpenCompany, W3C, and the Academy Software Foundation, curated by **Marc Petit** of the Metaverse Standards Forum.

DEVELOPING OPEN STANDARDS FOR THE METAVERSE:
Merging storytelling and games mechanics using AI
Neal Stephenson, who has coined the term „Metaverse" in his novel "Snowcrash" (1992), will share his thoughts on AI with the audience.

INTEROPERABILITY: 30 years from now…
König-Karl-Halle, Friday, April 26, 14:30
Join Sol Rogers, FMX Program Chair and Magnopus Head of Innovation, alongside Rob Bredow, SVP & Chief Creative Officer at Industrial Light & Magic and Jan Pinkava, Oscar-winning filmmaker and Director of Animationsinstitut at Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg, for an insightful exploration into the future of technology and storytelling. Get ready to glimpse into the possibilities of tomorrow and how they might affect our lives in the decades to come.

THE STATE OF VFX

VFX FOR FEATURES: The VFX of POOR THINGS
Yorgos Lanthimos' multi-award-nominated feature POOR THINGS has left audiences pleasantly disturbed. Join the BAFTA-winning Creative Director and Visual Effects Supervisor **Simon Hughes** (ALL OF US STRANGERS, THE FRENCH DISPATCH, DISTRICT 9) for a deep-dive into how visual effects can bring worlds of pure imagination to life.

VFX FOR EPISODIC: VFX and the World of FALLOUT
Andrea Knoll ("Stranger Things"), Head of VFX at Warner Bros., and Jay Worth ("Westworld") will present the VFX of Jonathan Nolan's post-apokalyptic series FALLOUT, streaming since April 11.
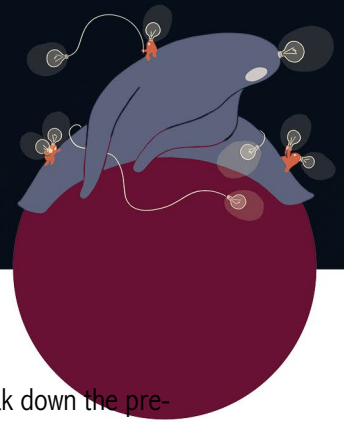
VFX FOR FEATURES: A Dive into the World of THE CREATOR
ILM's Charmaine Chan (VFX Supervisor) and Amanda Johnstone-Batt (CG Supervisor) break down the pre-production, shooting, and post VFX for Gareth Edward's THE CREATOR.

VIRTUAL PRODUCTION: Getting to final VFX in DOCTOR WHO
UK Studio REALTIME provided cutting-edge virtual production and futuristic CG for DOCTOR WHO: "Wild Blue Yonder", a special episode to commemorate the show's 60th anniversary. With the return of the much-loved David Tennant as the Doctor, the episode takes fans to the very edge of the universe where sinister alien doppelgangers steal the show. **James Coore**, VFX Supervisor, and **Jonathan Rawlinson**, Head of Episodic, will be talking through the process – from the on-set virtual production to final VFX.

VFX FOR EPISODIC: Road trip in the USA (and beyond) with PERCY JACKSON
Raynault vfx' mandate on the first season of PERCY JACKSON was to bring Rick Riordan's world to the screen: from Camp Half Blood to Olympus, you'll travel through the intricate domains of the Underworld as well as various iconic cities and landmarks of the United States. The small team at Raynault vfx demonstrated its proficiency by conceiving and producing over 10 extensive photorealistic cg environments of this mythical journey. Raynault's work on the Percy Jackson series also included the involvement on virtual production sets, early development concept art and on-location photography shoots.

VFX FOR FEATURES: Unleashing the Beasts: Behind the Scenes of GODZILLA X KONG: The New Empire
DNEG VFX Supervisors Paul Franklin and Aleks Pejic will walk the audience through the meticulous process behind bringing iconic titans like Godzilla and Kong to life on the big screen, as well as explore the creation of the menacing spider-creature, Charybdis, in the epic opening Rome battle sequence.

**VFX FOR FEATURES: Inside creative VFX development for Marvel Studios'
THE MARVELS**
Join us for a behind-the-scenes discussion about THE MARVELS with VFX Supervisors
Tara DeMarco and Sarah Eim, alongside pivotal vendor supervisors **Dominik Zimmerle, Ernest Dios** (both Trixter), and **Pietro Ponti** (Industrial Light & Magic). They will discuss asset and FX ideation, creation, and collaborative sharing as they unravel the magic behind the stunning visual effects crafted for Goose, Saber Space Station, and the dynamic elements that bring this film to life.

VFX FOR EPISODIC: Yu Yu Hakusho: A Japanese local production and its global VFX
Yu Yu Hakusho is a Netflix live action series based on the popular Japanese manga. It was one of the first Japanese productions to attempt a true global VFX production, working with four previs vendors, nine VFX vendors, and an in-house VFX team spreading across six different countries (Japan, Korea, India, Canada, U.S., Australia). Every step of the way, "the usual way" was never the answer, considering both the Japanese and the Hollywood methods. In their session, Overall VFX Supervisor **Ryo Sakaguchi**, and **Christophe Rodo**, VFX Supervisor, Megalis VFX, will cover the VFX challenges encountered through all stages of production with the aim to achieve a world class VFX for a Japanese production.
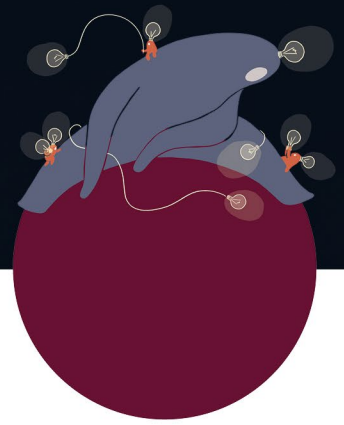
VFX FOR FEATURES: Ghostbusters – Frozen Empire
FX Supervisor Chris Messineo will demonstrate how he and his team brought to life a new generation of ghosts.

VFX FOR EPISODIC: Bending Space & time in LOKI 2
Time is out of control in the second season of LOKI on Disney+: The two-faced god Loki from Marvel's AVENGERS universe turns out not to be his original scheming self but a surprisingly heroic variant. Someone has to venture out into the vacuum of space to fix the time loom - but no protective suit can save them from time erosion. At FMX, VFX Supervisor **Christopher Smallfield** (Trixter) will explain how they came up with the look of that process.

THEN & NOW, curated by Ian Failes, befores & afters
Going old-school: Breaking down the practical and in-camera effects in **I'M A VIRGO**: Director Boots Riley's Amazon Prime Video series made significant use of what might be called "old-school" effects filmmaking, including in-camera effects with forced perspective shooting, large and small puppets, miniatures, practical effects and many specialized scale set-ups. Here, visual effects supervisor Todd Sheridan Perry will share the secrets of these in-camera approaches, which were also complemented with digital VFX techniques. In a follow-up to his talk, Todd Sheridan Perry will be joined by VFX journalist Ian Failes to deliver a masterclass on how to use in-camera effects and set up a forced perspective shoot, right there as a hands-on demo for attendees.

What you need to know to build VFX software: **Mark Elendt**, Senior Mathematician at SideFX, will present and be joined in conversation with Ian Failes to discuss his more than 30 year history in building visual effects software. Houdini is a mainstay at so many VFX, animation and games studios, and Elendt will dive into the history and intricacies of the tool, especially relating to rendering and its earlier incarnation as Prisms. Attendees will get to talk directly to Elendt in a more intimate setting, to get down into the finer details of building VFX tools.

THE ART OF ANIMATION

FEATURE ANIMATION: Crafting the look and feel of NIMONA through bespoke character surfacing and unique environment builds
Want to learn more about how Oscar-nominated **NIMONA** was created? Join **Avril Hug** (Character Surface Lead) and **Marco Manzini** (Environment Model Supervisor) from DNEG Animation as they explore the craft behind character surfacing and the environment builds in this incredible animated film. They will dive into how the team at DNEG Animation brought life to the story's characters and the unique world they live in. Touching on various elements from lighting on clothing to staying true to the feel of the original comics 2D environment, this is one not to be missed!

FEATURE ANIMATION: Collaborative Design in KUNG FU PANDA 4
Head of FX, Jason Mayer, will show you how the artists and technicians from DreamWorks Animation at every step in the VFX pipeline were able to contribute and blend both 2D and 3D influences to achieve the final vision.
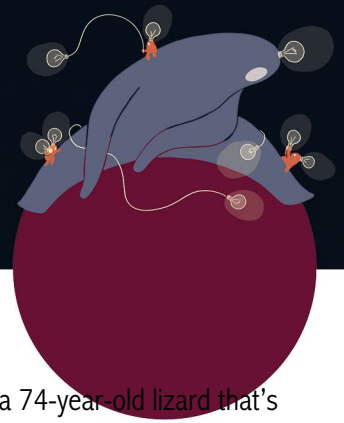
FEATURE ANIMATION: Landing on LEO

Leo is a recent release from Netflix and Happy Madison Productions and tells the story of a 74-year-old lizard that's been living in the same Florida school for decades but one day decides it's time to escape! Join the film's Art Director, Kristen Anderson (Animal Logic) and Animation Director, Jason Figliozzi (Netflix), as they take you through the character design process from concept to animation and all the iterations in between, with a focus on Leo and Ms. Malkin from an animated cast of over 200. They'll explore the vast range of scale in their hero characters and will break down the most challenging scene to reveal how they pulled off this beautifully crafted, 3D-animated musical comedy.

THE POWER OF COLLABORATION

MANAGING CHANGE: Real-time dreams: Can game engine unlock story worlds?

As the lines have blurred between games and stories, animation and VFX, short form and features, content creation presents new creative and technological challenges. While showing a sneak peek of the upcoming short film, DREAM OF THE BLACK WHALES, producer, Chris deFaria, along with co-director, Paul Franklin and DNEG Dimension's, Steve Jelley, will discuss how they're tackling these industry changes by activating a novel game-engine pipeline.

**STUDIO INSIGHTS: How to improve profitability**

How can the use of the full power of Shotgrid or a similar data base help you improve the profitability of your VFX/animation production? Heiko Burkardsmaier (VFX Executive Producer and Head of Business & Legal Affairs at Accenture Song Content Germany) will cover basics such as Overhead calculation, Capacity usage and essential KPIs. He will also give a deeper dive into project planning and controlling.

STUDIO INSIGHTS: One on One

Studio Insights highlights the latest business trends and issues facing our industry. Topics range from changing production methods and distribution models to the impact of new technology and managing a successful career. The panelists are Anne Kolbe (Executive Vice President, Visual Effects, Warner Bros. Pictures), Kim Davidson (President & CEO, SideFX), Franck Lambertz (Head of Paris Office/VFX Supervisor, Rodeo FX) and Dave Gougé (Technology & Entertainment Executive).

GLOBAL INCLUSION, COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION, curated by Julie Ann Crommett (Collective Moxie, WIA) and Jinko Gotoh (Producer, WIA)

In order to connect ideas globally, we have to build an industry where we all belong. This track builds on last year's inclusion and sustainability theme asking each of us to commit to connection and community. How do we recognize our shared humanity while celebrating our uniqueness? The sessions will explore different aspects of storytelling and ask us what we can do to drive greater empathy and connection, understanding that it's necessary for our shared success. Attendees will leave this track with new ideas and tangible actions to immediately impact their organizations, communities, technology, and creative work.
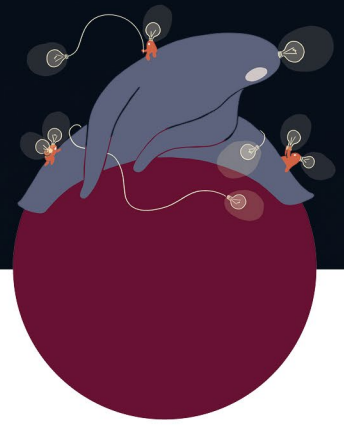
Izumi Yoshida will share the process of making her award-winning short film THE BRIDGE, that deals with social complexities and healing after a war. Coincidentally, her team was all female. Audience members will leave with insights about the creative process and how to drive inclusion within their own work and teams.

Julie Ann Crommett is going to host a panel on LGBTQ+ representation in VFX and Animation with **Bret Parker** (director, PETE), **Charmaine Chan** (THE CREATOR, ILM), **Nosipo Maketo-van den Bragt** (Choc Tribe) and **Michaela Olsen** (Mighty Oak). They will discuss how LGBTQ+ identities intersect in their life, creative work, geographies, and companies. Audience members can take away a better understanding of the opportunities for LGBTQ+ people and stories within our industry.

Studio leaders **Michaela Olsen** and **Noriko Matsumoto** (Dwarf Studios) will use the FMX stage for an in-depth conversation about representation and inclusion in Stop Motion. They will share how they built their companies and talk about tangible actions of how to drive inclusion within stop motion and where there are opportunities to learn from each other globally.

INDUSTRY EXCHANGE: „„NO CGI' is really just INVISIBLE CGI"
Nancy Ward, Executive Director of the Visual Effects Society (VES), discusses with Kim Davidson, President and CEO of SideFX, and Danish VFX Supervisor Jonas Ussing about his call for more recognition for VFX creators – after studios recently acted as if they didn't need VFX for movies like "Top Gun".

TOOLS OF TOMORROW

DIGITAL HUMANS: Digital Humans Panel
We are on the brink of a fundamental shift in what's possible. Issac Bratzel (Founder & CEO, AvatarOS), Dan Ring (Senior ML Team Lead, Chaos), and Hanno Basse (CTO, Digital Domain) will go in a candid and frank discussion, moderated by Mike Seymour (Co-Founder, FXGuide).

LIGHTING & RENDERING: Secrets on stylized animation
With every major animation studio doing stylized animation, it's safe to say stylization is here to stay. Owner and animator **Daniel Damm** (Damm it!) will talk about who brought it on, and how they did it. How a few people thought outside the box and changed the entire industry. Having seen where it all started, he will take a look at how things are done today. What are the current tools able or unable to do? Stylized animation is the ultimate art vs technology. Will it become available in real time engines the same way traditional 3D has after decades of technical advancements? And who will be the one bringing it there?

Real-Time: WAR IS OVER! Animation Meets Real-Time at Wētā FX
Learn about the art and technology employed across the production of Oscar-nominated **WAR IS OVER!** – Inspired by the Music of John & Yoko. Leveraging the power of their VFX and animation pipeline with the strengths and efficiencies of real-time filmmaking, learn how the **Wētā FX** team crafted the unique visuals on this animated short.
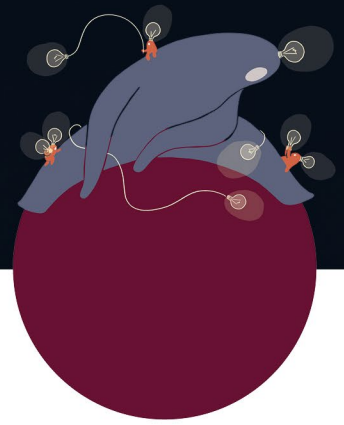
DESIGNING SPACES

SOUND DESIGN, curated by Nami Strack: The Sound of DUNE Part 2
Martin Kwok, Sound Editor of the epic Sci-Fi movie "Dune 2", will explain, how he created the thunderous sound shaking cinema seats.

EXPANDING REALITIES

LOCATION-BASED ENTERTAINMENT: Immersive visual splendor in Paris
Join the team of **Moment Factory**, as it will dive into the creative and technical challenges faced in the studio's most recent projects, such as AURA Invalides, the monumental experience beneath the dome at Les Invalides in Paris. Get a behind-the-scenes look at their work and learn about the solutions that brought these iconic experiences to life. This session will be part of the FMX track LOCATION-BASED ENTERTAINMENT curated by **Brent Strong**, Executive Creative Director at Walt Disney Imagineering.

GAMES & BEYOND: THE BEAR – Making Meaningful Mobile Games and Designing for Calmness
Clara Deitmar and Julius Dorsel, alumni of the Animationsinstitut, have provided all three trailers for FMX, ITFS and APD. Just now they also have published their first game THE BEAR and will present it at FMX.

**EU XR: presenting a unique line-up of XR Innovation Actions during opening day**
Join us for an exclusive showcase featuring insightful presentations, followed by a panel discussion bringing together five projects funded by the European Commission - PANEURAMA, MAX-R, EMIL, XRECO and TRANSMIXR. We'll discuss and provide valuable insights into the collaborative efforts shaping the future of XR and the transformative potential all these projects hold across diverse technologies and industries.

Experience first-hand what these particular projects are all about and immerse yourself in their live demos at FMX, located in the foyer of Bertha-Benz throughout the entire opening day.

MASTERCLASSES

Acting for Animators with Ed Hooks
Ed Hooks, author of the book "Acting for Animators – 4th Revised Edition", explains in this acting workshop especially designed for Animators the connections between regular reality and theatrical reality, scene structure, characterization, comedy vs. drama, heroes and villains.
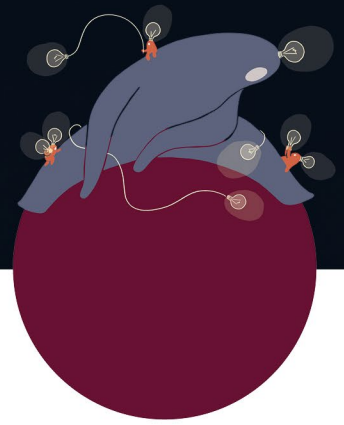
EDUCATION

22 film schools from 9 countries will be part of this year's FMX School Campus, showcasing their curricula and latest student projects in the arts and technology of animation, visual effects, computer games, and VR/AR.
The FMX host Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg will be on site with its Animationsinstitut, presenting current projects and organizing workshops. FMX attendees are invited to visit the Animationsinstitut's Diploma Showroom off site at the Filmakademie campus in Ludwigsburg.

EDUCATION TODAY & TOMORROW: That which doesn't kill us… AI Education Panel
What's AI going to do to education? The participants Lotte Marie Allen (Computer Arts, School of Visual Arts), Olia Lialina (Design and Media, Merz Akademie Stuttgart), Harvey Goodall (VFX, Arts University Bournemouth) and Stefan Albertz (3D Animation and VFX, Hamm-Lippstadt University of Applied Sciences) have different angles on the topic, both artistically and technologically.

SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS
One of our most important goals is to connect young talents with VFX, animation and games industry professionals. FMX 2024 will present selected projects by students or recent graduates from schools participating at the School Campus. The presentations give an insight into development and production processes, making-ofs and behind the scenes at film and animation schools where innovative and high quality projects are produced.

FORUM

Marketplace
The Marketplace complements the conference program with an exhibition space. Hardware, software and services are being presented here, as well as research projects and start-ups. An international audience of professionals and students gathers at the Marketplace to learn about the latest products and developments.

Recruiting Hub
At the Hub, international VFX, animation, design and games studios are looking for new artists to work on their latest cutting-edge digital media, entertainment and visualization projects. Young talents, professionals and alumni will meet over four days with employers from around the world.

Recruiting Presentations
During the Recruiting Presentations, companies will give you an insight into their work.
They will speak about their recent and upcoming projects, present their facilities and work
benefits, and show excerpts from their latest and greatest work.

School Campus
The School Campus is the Education Fair at FMX. Media design and technology faculties and programs from Europe and around the world present their courses and campuses in an open, relaxed atmosphere. Prospective students get first-hand information straight from lecturers, alumni and current students on studies and projects, laying the ground for careers in digital entertainment creation.
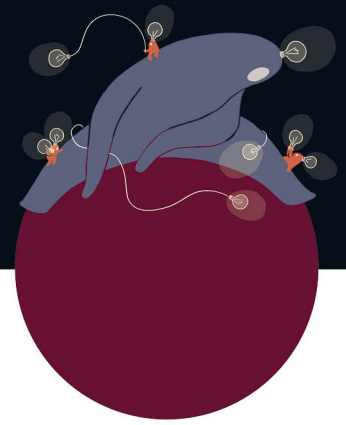
MORE HIGHLIGHTS

Get-Together
The FMX Get-Togethers gives the community the opportunity to meet and network in the evening after the conference – right outside the venue!

ITFMX Screening: NIMONA
Join us for a special cinema-screening of NIMONA in cooperation with the Stuttgart International Festival of Animated Film (ITFS).