

YOWZA DIGITAL BRINGS EVOLVED DINOSAURS TO LIFE FOR “DINOSAPIEN”

TORONTO, Canada (July xx, 2007) -- Toronto-based animation studio Yowza Digital has been awarded 3D animation and visual effects production on DINOSAPIEN, the live action and animated adventure series from BBC Worldwide and CCI Entertainment in association with Discovery Kids, CBBC and Alberta Filmworks. The first season of DINOSAPIEN aired on July 7 in the U.S. on Discovery Kids, after its earlier debut on BBC Kids Canada.

DINOSAPIEN is set at a dinosaur summer camp in the wilds of Canada's badlands, where a teenage girl's paleontologist father mysteriously disappeared on a fossil hunting expedition. Lauren (Brittney Wilson) encounters a living, intelligent DinoSapien, one of several dinosaurs who have evolved like humans over time, whom she befriends and names Eno. Through Eno, Lauren hopes to learn the fate of her father, but she must protect him from the Diggers, a band of dinosaurs that are trying to kill him. Over two seasons, DINOSAPIEN will unravel the mystery of the evolved dinosaurs and reveal the extraordinary truth of what really happened to Lauren's father in the badlands.

Yowza Digital produced an average of six minutes of integrated CG and animation for each of the 15 half-hour episodes. Yowza Digital's executive producer Pete Denomme had worked with the series executive producer Rick Siggelkow previously on ACE LIGHTNING, also a live action and CG series, so they had already established a road-tested visual effects and animation production pipeline. Yowza Digital sent three of its artists to the series' location in Drumheller, Alberta, with pre-approved storyboards, which they refined with the first unit. The storyboards predicated what would be shot for the 3D animation team to tell the story of the newly discovered DinoSapiens. Yowza Digital's animation director, Marc Lougee, directed the second unit to generate back plates and other establishing shots.

Back at Yowza Digital, Lougee lead a team of 20 artists, who benefited from intensive research and development on dinosaurs for the creation of the DinoSapiens. Expert paleontologists and special effects model builders constructed models of a speculative modern dinosaur and helped to design the look of the three main dinosaur characters.

Yowza Digital worked closely with paleontologist Hall Train to determine DinoSapien behavior and movement, as well as coloration and texture, while giving the CG characters a scientific base of realism. Yowza Digital's animators had to divest themselves of any sort of humanistic thinking in creating the performances for the creatures and instead took their leads from dog and bird expressions. Because of the creatures' reptilian facial features, much attention was paid to the expression in the eyes to convey emotion and engage the audience, with top-notch lighting and compositing to finesse the nuances.

The 2D design of the creatures was very specific about hand – arm – shoulder limitations and range of movement. Similar limitations were built into the rigging process so the animators would not be tempted to revert to anthropomorphic gestures and action. Mindful of the legacy of BBC and Discovery’s award-winning WALKING WITH DINOSAURS, the animation team made it a priority to accurately represent dinosaur movement and behavior, but to take a new approach in portraying how evolved creatures might interact with humans in our world.

The challenge for Yowza Digital was to create fully displaced characters that were true to the series creators’ vision, but also rendered on an efficient production timeline. Each episode features six minutes of animation, so the characters needed to be light enough in geometry for animators to incorporate all the action, sometimes with all three CG characters in a scene, on the front end, and streamlined enough to render in less than three to six minutes per frame with fewer render passes.

Said Denomme “Achieving this scale of production and ‘Jurassic Park’ believability on a children’s television budget and schedule was no small feat. And our audience has grown up with amazing animated creature features and television, so they are very sophisticated. Our team produced great imagery and drama because of their understanding of story and character. We’re very proud of what they’ve accomplished.”

Eno and the Diggers were modeled and UV-mapped in Maya; texture maps with bump and displacement were generated separately in Zbrush. These maps were then imported back into Maya and tested with Mental Ray to perfect the look. Once the look was achieved, Turtle was used for the final render solution. For critical motion blur, a 2D plug-in called Reel Smart was used in the compositing of running and fighting sequences.

While Yowza Digital continues production on DINOSAPIEN, its visual effects division, Switch VFX, is in production on the feature films SAW IV and SNOW BUDDIES, and the CBC movie of the week THE SECRET OF THE NUTCRACKER. Switch VFX recently completed visual effects for EMOTIONAL ARITHMETIC, the ABC Family series FALLEN, and the miniseries EVEREST 82.

About Yowza Digital, Inc.

Toronto-based Yowza Digital, Inc. was founded in 2003 by executive producer Pete Denomme, creative director Claude Chiasson and finance and business affairs executive Laurie Thompson to produce 3D animation for feature films and television.

Switch VFX is the visual effects division of Yowza Digital. Switch VFX specializes in the production of photorealistic digital visual effects and CG character creation for feature films and television. Switch VFX was founded in 2004 by visual effects supervisor Jon Campfens, executive producer Pete Denomme and finance and business affairs executive Laurie Thompson, all of whom have had distinguished careers in the

industry, with the intent to bring experience and talent to a highly responsive, affordable and independent new venture.

For more information please call 416-530-4237 or visit www.yowzaanimation.com

Press contact:

Pete Denomme
Yowza Digital, Inc.
219 Dufferin Street Suite 102-A
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6K 1Y9
416-530-4237
www.yowzaanimation.com
