

News release



HP and Alias sponsor multi-user animation showcase to highlight benefits of utility computing

BRISTOL, UK, SEPT 2004 – HP and Alias® today announced their showcase for short animated motion pictures using an experimental HP Laboratories utility rendering service. The SE3D animation showcase will be co-funded by HP and Alias, which produces Maya®, an Academy Award-winning 3D animation application. SE3D, pronounced 'seed', will investigate how utility computing will change the technology and economics of media production and its potential for uncovering new talent for the animation industry.

"Utility computing has the potential to shake up the media industry by lowering cost barriers for animators and others. They can call on a service like ours when they need it, paying only for what they use," said Steve Hinde, project manager for the prototype utility rendering service at HP Labs Bristol, managing the SE3D showcase project at HP Labs Bristol. "We hope services like this could uncover highly talented young people who would otherwise never be able to work in animation."

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The experimental service uses Maya as its rendering engine and is a testbed for a range of innovative research technologies developed by HP Laboratories in Bristol, UK, and Palo Alto, California.

The SE3D showcase will give 10 film makers, selected by an expert media industry panel, the opportunity to create a film-festival-quality animated short on any subject they choose. HP Labs will provide the animation service and utility computing resources free of charge while Alias will provide access to Maya and UK film-funding agencies will provide financing for showcase participants.

The rendering service draws upon the flexible power of hundreds of processors at the HP Labs utility data centre, giving the participants access to Maya's sophisticated special effects, which generally need the power of dedicated, multi-processor computer render farms and specialist software. For small-to-medium-sized animation companies, the cost of buying and updating this equipment can be prohibitive. Utility computing will allow them to rent the service they need on-demand and pay only for what they use.

Names of the showcase participants will be announced in November at Brief Encounters, the UK's leading festival of animation. The films will be completed in time to be shown at the Animated Encounters festival at



Watershed, in Bristol, in April 2005, and may also be shown at other European festivals and on TV channels.

The technology behind the unique utility service...

The HP Labs-Maya service will allow the participants to securely upload digital models of characters and scenery for rendering into final frames. The participants then download the completed frames from the utility service, all from the animators' own offices through a Web portal link to the HP Labs service.

Rendering, the computing process that adds detail, texture, colour and lighting to an animator's virtual 'wire-frame' outline, is one example of the many different industries that could benefit from utility computing. The utility model offers on-demand access to a global pool of resources, such as processors and storage, making computing accessible in the same way as traditional utilities, such as electricity. It enables the flexible consumption of computing resources to adapt to variable business cycles leading to a better return on IT investment and reduced business risks.

"Many of our customers are pushing the boundaries and producing groundbreaking effects but the render pipeline is a huge overhead and we believe it has to move on. Without this type of research 'bigger, better, faster' will never be achieved and consumer expectation will not be met," said Mark Cass, entertainment business manager for Alias in the UK.. "Alias is very pleased to be partner with HP Labs to drive this part of the workflow

HP Labs proved this concept last summer by working with internationally renowned media production company 422 to create a four-minute animation called *The Painter* using a utility rendering service in Bristol. HP Labs, Palo Alto, also provided DreamWorks with a custom-built utility rendering service to help with the production of Shrek 2 earlier this year.

About HP

HP is a technology solutions provider to consumers, businesses and institutions globally. The company's offerings span IT infrastructure, personal computing and access devices, global services and imaging and printing. For the four fiscal quarters ended July 31, 2004, HP revenue totaled \$78.4 billion. More information about HP (NYSE, Nasdaq: HPQ) is available at www.hp.com.

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