Mocap Saves the Day in Dream Corp LLC

A few years ago, when Daniel Stessen's series *Dream Corp LLC* premiered on Adult Swim, it became the first show on the cabler that incorporated rotoscoping and motion capture to produce its animation. The show, which is an absurd workplace comedy set in a neglected dream therapy facility, incorporates live action, CG and motion capture. *Dream Corp LLC*'s motion capture was produced by L.A.-based creative studio Bemo, which used its advanced markerless mocap solution iPi Motion Capture. The job demands a fast-paced production pipeline and extensive mocap technology to create the surreal animation sequences that distinguish between the show's dreams and reality.

Series lead CG animator **Brandon Parvini** tells us that the show's demanding schedule requires a very fast and flexible, real-time motion-capture system, which is critical in the post-production pipeline (which also includes Cinema 4D, After Effects and ZBrush).

"We're given a rough notion of the creative direction for CG character development based on all the creative parameters that exist," Parvini says. "We are pretty much run-and-gun. While the edit is still being locked down, we are moving into 3D animation and solving tech and creative asks that come up. The moments where I need a capture, I pull out the Kinect, place it on a stool and capture action right there at my desk in roughly a 4x4 foot space."

The team studies the tone and shot selection and determines a reaction plan for each episode to see where there are opportunities or references to a character or figure that will need to be created. In many cases, the creative team knows only a day before if motion capture is required. Sometimes, requests require capture that same day.

According to Parvini, the strength of iPi mocap is its ease of use and smooth integration with Cinema 4D, the studio's central 3D application. "iPi mocap doesn't require a lot of fuss and setup to get rolling with recordings, which has made it a durable and irreplaceable part of our pipeline arsenal. Having a motion-capture solution that is accurate and also works easily in our production pipeline, encourages us to take risks and immerse ourselves in the creative process so that we can create a more jarring and visually engaging experience for everyone."

"The inclusion of markerless mocap is on its own a massive benefit for being able to quickly grab character animation on the fly," adds Parvini. "But iPi's suite is great about being able to quickly activate a single Kinect, take a step back, go through the animation while still being at my desk, and having the animation cleaned and retargeted and back in my DCC in under 15 minutes."

Parvini points out that one of the greatest challenges of the show is the need to constantly develop and problem solve. "While we approach an episode with a notion of what we're going to be making for it, things change fast. Being that a single animator is in charge of almost all aspects of a single scene for *Dream Corp* (beyond the roto-mation), you need to problem solve, create and [address] technical issues at the same time while still keeping pace for delivery," he explains. "It's an aggressive timeline which can only allow for so much noodling before you need to move forward and onto the next thing."

The talented animation and vfx veteran says this project has been a great opportunity to re-examine how he goes about his work. "For years, I worked and made things to look like a specific way, but this project asked me to throw away a lot of the tricks and tools I used to make my previous work," he explains. "While scary at first, it has become a really important moment for me where I am learning new ways to create and new aesthetics to explore. It's about not being scared of trying new things, and forcing yourself to try to explore new approaches."

Parvini believes that we're experiencing a period that offers a world of opportunities in

Dream Corp LLC

terms of animation and vfx. "There seems to be a limitless number of outlets for content, which ultimately means more niche and unusual projects can have an audience in our increasingly fragmented market," he notes. "The fact that shows can be a success without capturing what would be required of a standard broadcast network is incredibly exciting for the medium. I hope to begin to see more and more uncommon and peculiar (in a good way) projects bubble to the surface!" ◆

For more info, visit bemo.tv, ipisoft.com and adultswim.com/videos/dream-corp-llc.

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