



# TIMES ASCENT

Potential beyond boundaries

CHENNAI • WEDNESDAY • MAY 10, 2006 • FOR ADVERTISING QUERIES CALL 044-24342121

PAGES 14



Skull Island - home of angry dinosaurs, 10-foot long millipedes and hordes of giant scorpions, not to forget a gigantic ape swinging through the jungle and hanging off the cliff to fight his enemies and rescue his lady love. As you witness this spectacular sight with bated breath, you wonder, is Skull Island for real? Yes, this world does exist - at Weta Studios in New Zealand. Peter Jackson, director, King Kong demonstrated what high-end technology can accomplish when he instilled human emotions in a giant ape and transported you to a fantasy world where an ape could spend romantic evenings with his human girlfriend gazing at the setting sun.

Through VFX (Visual Special Effects), nothing seems to be impossible. Star Wars, Jurassic Park, E.T, Titanic and King Kong have defied conventional realities by erasing the distinct divide between real and surreal. Our *desi* filmmakers too are bringing the magic back in



## Is India ready for its *desi* version of The Matrix, King Kong and Mission Impossible? Yes! says Viren Naidu

### JURASSIC PARK IN INDIA?

Colin Brown, Chairman, Cinesite, a Kodak company that worked on movies like Harry Potter and all the Bond movies shares his views:

### THE PACE IS SLOW...

The VFX industry in India is still in its nascent stage. VFX is not about high-end hardware and software, but it is an art form executed by a skilled engineer. Bollywood is still scratching the surface.

### Go Bollywood...

Bollywood is doing mending jobs. We may not have the kind of budgets for VFX like a Hollywood film, but if we really understood the medium we would be able to do a much better job.

movies through VFX. *Black, Rang De Basanti, Devdas, Koi Mil Gaya, and Dhoom* have done just that.

### BOLLYWOOD CALLING

Pankaj Kedia, Regional Manager, South East Asia & India, Autodesk Media and Entertainment says, "*Black* used colour as a key effect that gave it a 'period' look and communicated deeper emotions. In *Rang De Basanti*, the flashback shots where the transition from present to past were shown so seamlessly that the fact it was artificially done wasn't evident at all," says Kedia. Many skeptics may state that Rakesh Roshan made success with a friendly alien, but that's exactly what Spielberg did in E.T. way back in 1982. But *Jajantaram Mamantaram* which had

over 90 minutes of VFX and Prime Focus' *Vaah! Life ho to Aisi*, that reportedly had a VFX budget of Rs.60 million silenced the critics.

Kedia enlists reasons why VFX will be a boon for the new age Indian film:

**Evolved cinematographers:** They are becoming increasingly convinced of the value that technology can bring to a film.

**Going global:** As Indian films are trying to meet international standards.

**Rise of the action film:** Films such as *Dhoom* and *Dus* are high octane action films where VFX plays a crucial part.

### EAST MEETS WEST

"The VFX in Bollywood is doing a good job of satisfying the expectations of the local market. The industry will take

make their heroes do a summersault or cast Rajnikant in the lead instead.

"Movies like *Sin City* used VFX not only in the post production phase but also in the pre and the production process," says Rajiv Raghunathan, senior line producer, EFX.

There is a very large demand for digital artists from several companies, but the supply of properly trained and talented digital artists is severely limited. "Therefore, we need to hire raw talent and train the artists to achieve superior quality of work," says Prasad. "The talent exists, but is not being nurtured and channelised correctly. To this end, we have made some headway via alliances with training institutions to offer Indian students an opportunity to train on our cutting edge products such as 3ds Max, SMOKE and Maya," adds Kedia. VFX is not about fancy machines or software but, skilled IT manpower that can run those machines.

### BEHIND THE SCENES

Given that almost every international film has some level of VFX, outsourcing has taken off over the last 4-5 years. "Our role as a technology provider will become more significant in the outsourcing context. As visual effects projects go global, production houses across the world are partnering with their Indian outsourcing counterparts to work on a single project," says Kedia. VFX houses such as VCL and post-production facilities such as PrimeFocus and EFX are taking on several international projects based purely on quality levels that they can offer. With technologically driven movies like *Krissh* and *Dhoom 2* in the pipeline, VFX is here to stay. The day isn't very far when India will have its own *desi* version of 'The Terminator'.

viren.naidu@timesgroup.com

### THE CHRONICLES OF VFX



While *The Chronicles of Narnia* has over 1,600 of the most complex VFX shots ever created, they are brilliantly integrated into the story. "Over 400 artists at Rhythm & Hues spent well over 18 months working on this project and they involved Rhythm & Hues India who worked on several shots right here in the Mindspace, Malad, in collaboration with their colleagues in Los Angeles," says Prasad. Focusing on the work done in India, a specific example of the various compositing shots done involve the work on the centaurs (a character which has a horse's legs and a human being's upper half) that were shot with riders riding the horses. The Indian compositors had to remove the riders and the horse heads from the live action footage so that computer generated human upper halves could be integrated. In some shots the lower half had to be removed so that computer generated horse bodies could be fitted on.