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The Syndicate Uses Krakatoa to Build “House of Cards” for Radiohead
Groundbreaking Music Video Directed by James Frost Pushes the Limits of Krakatoa,
Frantic Films’ High Volume Point-Based Renderer

Winnipeg, Canada (August 11, 2008)—Frantic Films Software, the R&D arm of award-winning visual effects studio Frantic Films VFX and a division of Prime Focus Group, announced that its high-volume point-based particle renderer Krakatoa was used by The Syndicate throughout director James Frost’s groundbreaking “House of Cards” music video for the band Radiohead.

Krakatoa was used to render every single frame of the video, which eschews cameras and lighting for two pioneering scanning technologies that capture digital 3D images: the Geometric Informatics scanning system, which uses structured light to obtain 3D images at close proximity, and the Velodyne Lidar system, in which multiple lasers capture large environments such as landscapes.

The “shoot” resulted in long sequences of data captured at 30 frames per second—resulting in over two hours of footage. The Syndicate did the math and in total, the entire video represented upwards of 150 billion data points processed down from over two trillion data points. This information was then manipulated by The Syndicate in Autodesk 3ds Max and rendered in Krakatoa to generate live moving images. The effect has a surreal, haunting quality that depicts singer Thom Yorke, actress Lauren Maher, partygoers and a flyover of a suburban neighborhood as abstract mathematical points with rough glitchy edges, and which vaporize into millions of particles.

“We’ve been using Krakatoa for about a year on a variety of commercial and feature film projects, and even participated in the software’s original beta test,” said Adam Watkins, CG Supervisor, The Syndicate. “Today, Krakatoa is an essential component of our CG pipeline. Its interface is very intuitive, it’s surprisingly easy to learn and boasts an impressive feature set. There are tools that manage particle count, balance how particles are loaded and displayed, and handle particle culling where and when you need it. Krakatoa’s like a Swiss Army Knife loaded with all sorts of useful gadgets that you might not use straight away, but when you need them, they do the job brilliantly.”

Before Watkins and his team, consisting of CG TD Rodrigo Teixeira and Compositing Supervisor Alex Henning, could start manipulating the captured data, every frame was converted into 3D points and rendered out with Krakatoa so the 2D footage could be edited conventionally. Once The Syndicate had the data online and set up for Krakatoa to read, Watkins found he could render out entire sequences comprising billions of particles in next to no time.

Continued Watkins, “Throughout this whole process, including an intensive initial R&D phase, the Frantic Films Software support team was phenomenal. They provided numerous helpful suggestions very early on that guided our VFX crew on how to wrangle the terabytes of Lidar data that would be on our plate. And if there was ever an issue with the software, the problem was solved by tech support in a timely manner, if not right away.”

In addition to the Krakatoa plug-in and Autodesk 3ds Max for the 3D work, The Syndicate used the Particle Flow tool in 3ds Max with Orbaz Particle Flow Tools Boxes 1 and 3, all powered by Windows XP x64 running on 64bit CPUs. Concluded Watkins, "Krakatoa has superb integration with other particle plugins. It's really an integral part of our CG pipeline now, as we haven't come across another tool that can do what Krakatoa does."

About The Syndicate

The Syndicate is a creative design, branding services and digital production studio specializing in live action direction, visual effects, animation, motion graphics, and telecine for commercials, television and music videos. A division of Santa Maria-based feature film visual effects facility CafeFX, The Syndicate has worked with top agencies, networks and studios on award-winning commercials, television programs, and music videos that have been seen around the world.

For more information please call 310-260-2320 or visit www.syndicate.tv.

About Frantic Films VFX

Headquartered in Winnipeg, Canada, with offices in Vancouver and Los Angeles, Calif., Frantic Films VFX has been operating divisions that provide visual effects for film and television, and VFX software development since 1997. Frantic Films' VFX award-winning visual effects teams have worked on films including *Fantastic Four: The Rise of the Silver Surfer*, *Grindhouse*, *Superman Returns*, *X-Men 3*, *Poseidon* and many others. The company's software tools were developed to solve complex production challenges on in-house feature effects projects, and are also in use at many leading 3D animation and effects facilities worldwide. In November of 2007 Frantic Films VFX became a division of international post and VFX leader Prime Focus Group. For more information, visit <http://www.franticfilms.com>.

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