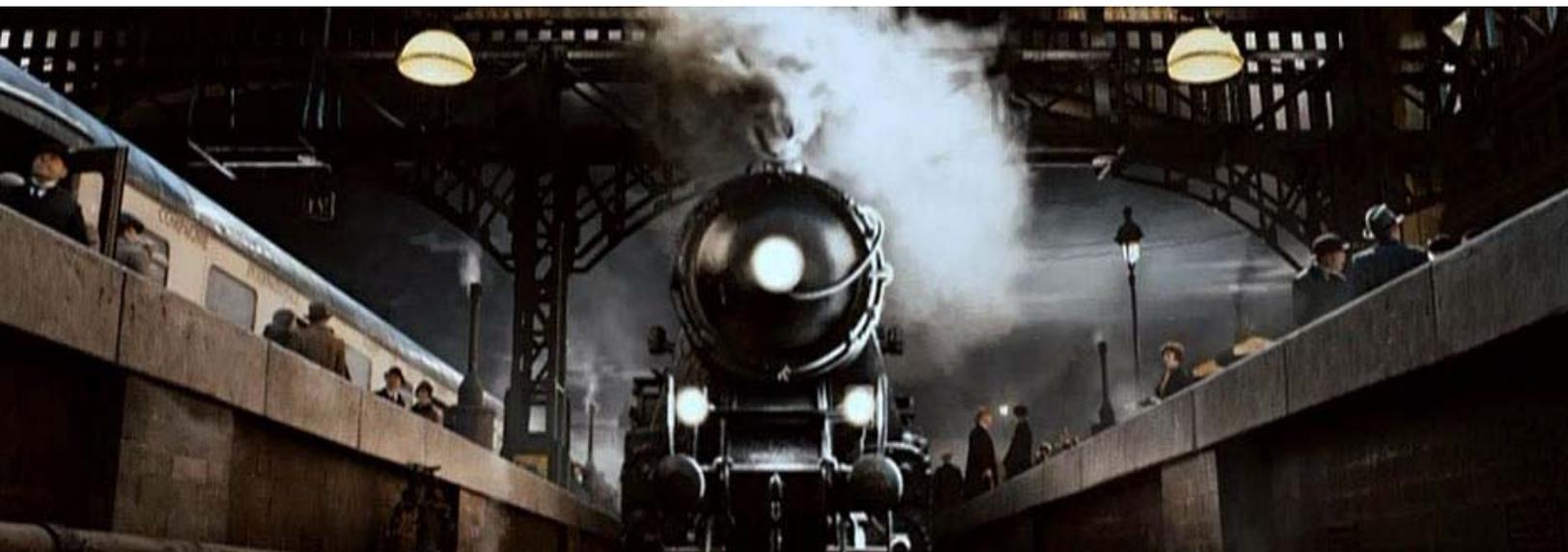


HUGO

Filmmaking past informs filmmaking future



by MARTIN SCORSESE, director
HUGO
in 3D

GK Films
Burbank, CA
www.gk-films.com

Paramount Pictures
Hollywood, CA
www.paramount.com

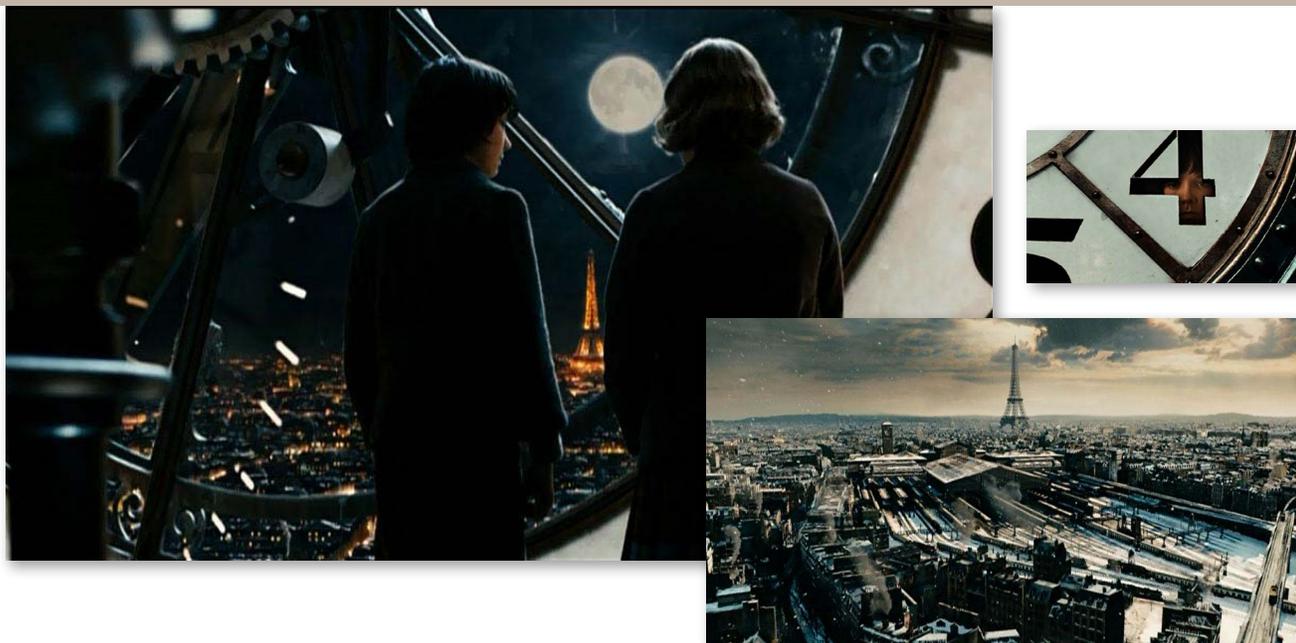
Visit the official movie site:
www.hugomovie.com

VFX Supervisor Rob Legato garners second Academy Award for visual effects in *HUGO*, created with the help of Adobe Creative Suite 5.5 Production Premium software

Viewers would not normally expect to see Martin Scorsese as the director of an adaptation of a popular children's book. But that is one of the many delightfully unique things about *HUGO*—a lavish adaptation of Brian Selznick's best-selling period novel, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*—in which a young orphan living in a Parisian train station unwittingly befriends the pioneering and brilliant silent filmmaker, George Méliès.

Oscar winner Rob Legato, whose numerous credits include *Apollo 13*, *Titanic*, *Harry Potter*, *The Aviator*, and *The Departed*, was the film's visual effects supervisor, second-unit director, and second-unit director of photography. For this project, Legato broke new ground, including *HUGO*'s application of genuine 3D, the use of the ARRI Alexa camera, re-creation of sets and techniques used in 1905, and research of filmmaking history, as well as the film's 800 highly-stylized visual effects shots—each fine tuned for discrete right and left eyes. His ingenious efforts paid off not only in the form of charmed audiences, but also in a second Academy Award for Legato. In all his various capacities on the project, Legato relied on Adobe Creative Suite 5.5 Production Premium software, including Adobe After Effects® CS5.5, Adobe Photoshop® CS5, Adobe Premiere® Pro CS5.5, and Adobe Media Encoder CS5.5 software.

Oscar winner Rob Legato used components of Adobe Creative Suite 5.5 Production Premium for previsualization, effects, color grading, and viewing various file formats.



Challenge

- Empower creativity on breakthrough film
- Provide entire team with hands-on, integral role and shared vision
- Advance workflow to enable rapid iterations
- Create digital intermediate on the fly

Solution

- Use inexpensive desktop systems and tools like Adobe After Effects, Adobe Premiere Pro, and Photoshop for previsualization, effects, color grading
- Create color-corrected dailies and lay down templates for the final digital intermediate (DI) as the film progressed
- Offer Scorsese, Oscar-winning editor Thelma Schoonmaker, Oscar-winning cinematographer Bob Richardson, colorist Greg Fisher, vendors, and others on the project a smooth data management and creative collaboration system

Benefits

- Visual effects artists could take a hands-on approach, experimenting with desktop tools to achieve the desired look
- Iterated quickly on desired vision and made creative decisions quickly and effectively
- Played back footage of any type to help move project forward
- Established creative collaboration model with Adobe software as the hub

"The future of filmmaking is art—and art is flourishing because young filmmakers can adopt affordable desktop tools like Adobe Creative Suite Production Premium to make hundreds of films, much like George Méliès made hundreds of films," says Legato.

Working hand in hand with Scorsese

In addition to his traditional role as VFX supervisor, Legato applied an HD-based workflow methodology that he has been refining on commercials and on Scorsese's films in recent years. He personally acts as a bridge between production and post-production by managing a file-based assembly line.

He can use color-corrected dailies and lay down color grade templates for the final digital intermediate (DI), as well as offer Scorsese, Oscar-winning editor Thelma Schoonmaker, Oscar-winning cinematographer Bob Richardson, colorist Greg Fisher, vendors, and others on the project a smooth data management and creative collaboration system. Legato also worked closely with Dante Ferretti, who created the elaborate Parisian train station for *HUGO*, and was rewarded with the Los Angeles Film Critics Award for production design.

This role makes him a foundational collaborator with Scorsese from start to finish by personally streamlining ways that the director and his team shoot, view, edit, color correct, and composite individual pieces of the movie on the way to creating the greater whole.

"My job is essentially digital supervision," says Legato. "I previsualize to help amplify Scorsese's vision, help figure out how we might capture certain scenes, what sets are going to be totally built out, and what sets might be extended or all green screen. I rely on Photoshop or After Effects to put together proposed shots and sequences quickly, and then I FTP it to the team or burn a Blu-ray disc using Adobe Media Encoder for sending to Scorsese."

Fast, nimble, and flexible

Legato uses Adobe tools to support his workflow because they provide a fast, nimble way to express his ideas and share them with the extended team. According to Legato, there are so many rapid iterations that it would take too much time to describe a shot and have someone else rough it out. With Photoshop and After Effects, Legato has the power to create a foundational vision, share it with the team, and make rapid adjustments. According to Legato, After Effects is perfect because it provides robust compositing tools, as well as the ability to move sequences around on a timeline.

Legato worked closely with the award-winning production designer and Adobe After Effects to achieve the desired look for the visual effects in the Parisian train station.



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Rob Legato
Visual effects supervisor, second-unit director, and second-unit director of photography, *HUGO*

Legato claims that, using Adobe software, many processes are easier and more direct for him to do himself, such as playing a collaborative role with colorist Fisher in the color correction process of visual effects shots, and so on. After Effects contributes in other ways to Legato's ability to complete more processes on his own.

“Tracking isn't one of my strengths, so now I use Warp Stabilizer in After Effects to stabilize shots instead of turning them over to somebody else,” he says. “Roto Brush is the same way. I can handle isolating objects or replacing backgrounds on my own. It all adds up to the ability to have more creative control and greater speed and finesse.”

The Swiss Army knife of production

Adobe Premiere Pro is an integral part of the workflow. Legato can place footage from literally any source in almost any format—QuickTime movies, .VOB files, footage from any DVD—onto the timeline and play back almost instantly so that roughing out a shot or editing a sequence can begin right away. This is especially useful because Scorsese often wants to use stock footage or show a scene from one of his substantial library of movies to illustrate a concept.

“Adobe Premiere Pro is our Swiss Army knife. We can put virtually any file onto the timeline—or mix and match a variety,” says Legato. “The Adobe Mercury Playback Engine decodes just about anything and plays it back so quickly that as soon as we think of an idea, we can all view it and start fine-tuning. Adobe Premiere Pro allows us to do more creative iterations simply by playing out to and from the software. Thanks to Adobe Premiere Pro, we don't have to wait to process footage, so the creativity keeps flowing without interruption.”

Legato uses Photoshop and After Effects as part of his previsualization process for both built and green screen shots.



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Rob Legato

Visual effects supervisor, second-unit director, and second-unit director of photography, *HUGO*

Toolkit

Adobe Creative Suite 5.5 Production Premium. Components used include:

- Adobe Photoshop CS5 Extended
- Adobe After Effects CS5.5
- Adobe Premiere Pro CS5.5
- Adobe Media Encoder CS5.5

Legato's workflow using Adobe software offers many timesaving advantages. The DI process starts from the very beginning, so dailies are actually done as a live DI. Subsequently for *HUGO* all the visual effects temps were color-timed using Greg Fisher's original dailies' Baselight corrections to fit seamlessly into the screening assembly of the film. Legato built the basic workflow mechanics for these processes, collaborating with his colleagues over a high-speed Aspera file transfer network. This proved crucial in allowing him to communicate quickly and seamlessly with Scorsese and Schoonmaker, particularly on issues of color and detail, so that they could keep moving approvals forward in their normal process, without the delays and detours normally associated with huge data-oriented projects like *HUGO*.

For Rob Legato and the rest of the crew, *HUGO* brought together the best of the past with the promise of the future of filmmaking. "One of the huge thrills of working on this project was delving into the past," says Legato. "I will never forget sitting in a projection room with Martin Scorsese, Bob Richardson, Dante Ferretti, and others and seeing the first film that ever went through a camera. Embarking on a project to celebrate the birth of film in Paris and the genius of George Méliès—it's hard to even describe what that feels like."

Visit the official movie site:

www.hugomovie.com

For more information

www.adobe.com/products/creativesuite/production



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