

## MAC AFICIONADO TURNED PC ENTHUSIAST Profile of The Orphanage

by Claudia Kienzle

As a loyal Macintosh® aficionado, the last thing visual effects creator Stu Maschwitz thought he'd ever do was to replace his sexy Mac dual-800 G4 computer with a Microsoft® Windows®-based workstation. After all, he'd been on a Mac since his days as an effects supervisor in the Rebel Mac Unit at top movie effects factory Industrial Light + Magic.

Now at The Orphanage, a San Francisco-based high-end visual effects and film production company he co-founded with fellow ILM alumni Jonathan Rothbart and Scott Stewart, Maschwitz says he was astounded to discover that the workstation was running Adobe® After Effects®, his facility's visual effects compositing software of choice—faster and better than even the hottest Mac. Now he says there's just no going back.

"The PC wasn't just a little bit faster. It was significantly faster. And that fact was just too compelling to ignore, even for the staunchest Mac fan," says Maschwitz. Among its recent credits, The Orphanage has produced visual effects for such movies

multiply that by 10 or 20 or 30 workstations in the shop, it adds up to significant productivity gains that enable us to produce more processor-intensive effects shots, with higher quality results than before."

The affordability factor means that The Orphanage has been able to significantly expand its Intel® processing-powered render farm and finish their After Effects creations much faster. For example, while working on the Playstation2 spot, Maschwitz says they were able to render 40 effects-intensive frames in the same time it would have taken to render a single frame.

### OPTIMIZATION

Another myth about Windows that was soon dispelled was the notion that companies like Intel, Dell™, and Microsoft are not as in tune with the unique requirements of this niche market as Apple.

"What we have found is that these companies have demonstrated a commitment to making After Effects and our other key applications



as "Vanilla Sky," "Jackass: the Movie," "Jeepers Creepers 2," and "Hero" (China's 2002 Oscar nominee for best foreign film); a music video for Cher, and many national commercials, including a spot for Playstation2®.

### PRODUCTIVITY

This revelation about the speed of working in Windows came to him one day last year when he happened to move his work over to a workstation temporarily because his facility's predominantly Mac infrastructure was consumed by a big project.

But, soon after he opened his After Effects project there, Maschwitz was struck by just how much faster it was running. The very next day, he had a brand new Dell Precision™ dual Intel® Xeon™ processor 2.8GHz workstation sitting in place of his Mac, and has since used it for all his "hard core" effects and compositing-intensive work, with minimal platform transition issues.

"If increased processing power doubles your productivity, but costs you twice as much, that isn't cost-effective. What makes our move to Windows a no-brainer is that PCs are less expensive than Macs, so we can have more of them in-house," says Maschwitz. "When you take the time saved at one PC, and

run blazingly fast on the Windows platform," says Maschwitz. "In fact, because of this cooperation, our applications are actually better optimized and better supported on the PC side."

One example of this synergy is the way that Windows applications perform more efficiently by utilizing Hyper-Threading Technology† (HT Technology), a new innovation from Intel that is available on its Xeon and select Pentium® 4 processors. "HT Technology enables the processor to work on two tasks simultaneously, providing a tremendous improvement in the creation and rendering of After Effects shots," says Maschwitz. "With After Effects and HT Technology, we are experiencing significant speed boosts, more so than could be gained by adding a few more megahertz."

"What I've always liked about After Effects is that it was designed to maximize all of its host platform's processing power—rather than relying on third-party hardware accelerators that quickly become obsolete," Maschwitz added. "So, as Intel® platforms and technologies and the Windows OS continue to run faster, After Effects will always use all of that available power to its advantage."

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†Hyper-Threading Technology requires a computer system with an Intel® Pentium® 4 processor at 3.06GHz or higher, a chipset and BIOS that utilize this technology, and an operating system that includes optimizations for this technology. Performance will vary depending on the specific hardware and software you use. See [www.intel.com/info/hyperthreading](http://www.intel.com/info/hyperthreading) for more information.

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