

Keyframe Digital Productions used gaming experience to delve into the US\$45 billion visual effects industry

Working on television series and blockbuster films, such as X-Men, Keyframe

Digital Productions employs over 30 full-time animators and visual effects artists

Fast facts

With roots in popular console and personal computer video game development, Keyframe Digital Productions Inc. has evolved into a full service digital art, animation and visual effects studio. Focusing less on gaming and more on visual effects and animation, the company is producing original animated television series and providing visual effects and cost saving pre-visualization for blockbuster films.

Why Ontario

The Ontario government provides film and television producers with financial incentives to do business in Ontario. The province has the highest research and development (R&D) tax credits of any G7 country, better than France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. In fact, the combined federal and provincial tax breaks can repay up to CDN \$44 for every CDN \$100.00 spent in R&D.

Business advantage

Keyframe is the first Canadian company to specialize in pre-visualization, a process that is used to plan a scene before filming commences. Starting as storyboards, the scene is generated by a computer as low-resolution animations. The sets created in this phase are exact replicas of the stage and after these virtual sets are built, rough computer versions of the actors

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Founded in 1997 by Clint Green and Darren Cranford and located in picturesque Niagara-on-the-Lake, a community nestled between St. Catharines and Niagara Falls, Ontario, Keyframe's digital effects and animation work includes original children's animated series and international movie blockbusters, such as *X-Men* and *Driven*.

Why Ontario

Over the last five years nearly every film nominated for a special effects Oscar has used technology development in Ontario. As a result of Ontario's international special effects reputation, The Computer Animation Studios of Ontario (CASO), a non-profit organization, was founded in 2005 to promote and grow the province's industry. Brian Simpson, Keyframe Chief Executive Officer, has been a member of the CASO board since December 2007.

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Pre-visualization can also expose potential production problems. "When we were working on *X-Men*, the production crew was in the process of building a very expensive 40-foot stone wall and a huge bluescreen," said Cranford. "But by creating the exact camera view - looking out of the jail cell - we realized that most of the wall and the area behind the camera were not visible on camera, so we were

able to save the production a huge amount of time and money on the construction of the set."

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Keyframe recently did visual effects, including wire and rig removal and created computer generated elements such as crowds and police vehicles, for *XIII*, a NBC Universal Inc. four hour television mini-series starring Stephen Dorff and Val Kilmer. The studio also performed motion tracking, color correction, blur effects and removed unwanted elements, while cloning and adjusting other elements from the original footage to complete the finished sequence.

Future growth plans

Keyframe is working with Kavaleer Productions, based in Dublin, Ireland, to co-develop the animated children's series *Sock Monsters*. "We are currently in negotiations with several European children's networks who are very pleased with the animated samples and love the creative concept," said Brian Simpson, Chief Executive Officer.

In February 2008 Keyframe announced that it is developing an original children's animated series, *Peggy's Little Harbour*. "We'll launch Peggy through a Canadian broadcaster, with whom we are in discussions," said Green, "then roll it out in Europe, the United States and Latin America."

Keyframe also announced in February 2009 that it was selected to provide visual effects for *Warehouse 13*, a SCI FI Channel original series. Filming began in March 2009 with an eye to a July premiere.

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