Cobalt™ Helps Create Mayhem

Did Sonny pull off a murder? Did he program himself to operate on the dark side? Is it insane to go after a robot for criminal malfunction?

In the 2004 movie, *I, Robot,* Will Smith plays a detective investigating a murder case where the main suspect is Sonny, the robot. Although murder is bad stuff, Sonny himself was good news for Ashlar-Vellum and their Cobalt™ CAD and 3D modelling software. In the hands of Dave Kindlon and Dan Platt, Cobalt, brought Sonny from dream to reality with jointed mechanical framework, complex external parts and amazing internal sections.

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I, Robot designer, Patrick Tatopoulos, first conceptualized the design for Sonny, then brought in product engineer Dave Kindlon and digital sculptor Dan Platt (*Stargate, Independence Day, Godzilla*) to translate Tatopoulos's 2D concept into a 3D object. Kindlon and Platt handled Sonny's digital industrial design. "I was asked," said Kindlon, "if I could have done my work on any other software package. To some extent, aspects of this project could have been handled by other packages such as Alias Studio and Autodesk Inventor. But Cobalt was able to handle both the mechanical and ID aspects of this project in one integrated package."

With the help of the Cobalt 3D model, Digital Domain, the studio CGI team, then translated Sonny-the-physical-model into Sonny-the-animated-star. The team was so impressed with the finely designed 3D model, that they asked for his various parts to scan into their drawings. Kindlon suggested a more efficient route: just take the IGES data directly out of the Cobalt CAD file. The original data then served as the basis for the animation work.

Sonny was a fascinating piece of work and another link-up with Ashlar-Vellum and leading-edge movie design. Kindlon began using Vellum 2.5 in 1992. He has worked on *Star Trek: Nemesis, Godzilla,* and *Stuart Little.* Kindlon says he "can't think of another product that can make such a nice combo of industrial and mechanical design."

Dave Kindlon and Dan Platt used Cobalt"s powerful set of CAD and 3D modelling tools to design and create all of Sonny's complex parts. The animators were able to take all the data directly from Cobalt to create the life-like character for the movie.
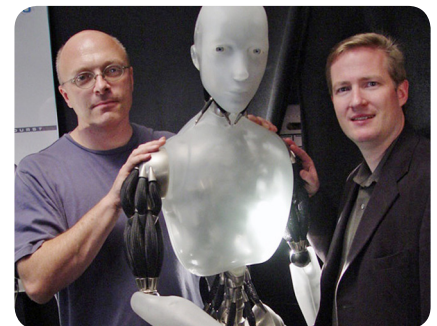
Designer Dave Kindlon, left, introduces Sonny to Robert Bou, president of Ashlar-Vellum.

Background/Contact

For more details on this project contact:

XTD Research
P.O. Box 582
Cedar Glen, CA 92321

661-263-7254

davek511@mac.com

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