

Absolute Post

By Claudia Kienzle



Image courtesy of Absolute Post.

Autodesk's Discreet software fuels growth at London's Absolute Post.

Two years ago, when David Smith launched Absolute Post, he understood that clients' creative expectations were rising to extravagant levels, while budgets were constricting. He knew that to succeed in this tough, budget-conscious climate, his new business would have to run extremely cost-efficiently.

"I knew that to please today's demanding clients, we would need powerful, sophisticated, proven technology capable of realizing any creative vision with extremely credible, seamless effects," says David Smith, owner of Absolute Post, a London boutique specializing in high-end commercials, music videos, and cinematic projects. "For the caliber of work we intended to do, there was only one solution on the market that would meet all our needs—Autodesk's Discreet product portfolio. Autodesk has no competition."

"Absolute Post is able to operate with the cost-efficiency and flexibility that is critical to survival in the post business today," says Smith. "Considered the standard in the industry, Discreet systems pack a considerable amount of horsepower into a relatively small space, which helps a boutique like ours manage its overhead."

Versatility and Value

Building on a high-speed Autodesk® Stone® and Autodesk® Wire® networking infrastructure, Absolute has installed many Autodesk® Discreet® systems, including two Discreet® Flame® systems on Silicon Graphics® Tezro® workstations; two Discreet® Flint® systems—one on SGI® and one Flint HD on a Linux® platform; and based on a favorable beta-testing experience, a new Flame 2K on Linux. The facility now owns nine Autodesk® Combustion® software seats, which Smith considers a cost-effective workhorse he liberally deploys on virtually every job requiring 2D paint and effects compositing.

Autodesk®



Images courtesy of Absolute Post.

Also in the mix are three seats of Autodesk® Maya® animation software, which Smith says, “(he) bought because it has a fantastic toolset and produces impressive results. It’s also an industry standard for 3D animation, which means I will always be able to find freelancers to work on the system if a demanding, complex job faces a very tight deadline.”

Together, these products span virtually every imaginable tool an effects artist could ever need, including visual effects, compositing, 2D paint, rotoscoping, 3D animation, keying, tracking, color correction, and more.

The Discreet Flame, Flint, and Combustion systems are supported by a network of 64-bit Autodesk® Burn™ renderers. “Burn has enhanced our productivity tremendously because time-consuming rendering is now done as a background process,” says Smith. “Without it, we’d have to ask our clients to ‘hold that thought’ while we stop for render processing. Since we installed Burn, our clients have noticed that there are no longer interruptions for rendering during their sessions. We no longer lose creative momentum.”

Collaborative Energy

When complex effects and compositing jobs come in, the footage is evaluated and the shots are organized on the hero machine, Flame, and then tasks are delegated to whichever system is best suited to handle it most efficiently.

“We like to have a mix of systems together in one room—like two Flame, three Combustion, and two Maya systems—so that our artists can work in a collaborative manner,” says Smith. “And clients like being able to watch all aspects of their job progressing—such as rotoscoping and matte work on Combustion, 3D CG elements being created on Maya, and effects compositing on our hero machine, Flame.”

Among the effects intensive commercial campaigns completed in this collaborative team environment are two spots for Snickers for Gorgeous Productions, and a commercial promoting O2’s Business Unlimited phone service for Home Corporation and VCCP Advertising, in addition to spots for Conoco, Harley Davidson, Minute Maid, and Visa. Absolute has also posted commercials for many major mobile phone service providers, including Vodafone and Virgin Mobile.

“The harsh reality of business today is that clients expect us to bid the job based on their storyboards or scripts, and then they hold us to that quote,” says Smith. “So it’s vital that we invest in the latest and greatest technology that enables the most cost-efficient workflow possible.”

Now in its third year, Smith says, “Absolute Post has doubled its business compared to last year. We have built this business on an Autodesk infrastructure and pipeline, and the results have exceeded our projections.”