

## VES Summit: Virtual Reality Could Be VFX Community's "Saving Grace"

5:57 PM PDT 10/17/2015 by Carolyn Giardina

- 72
- 91
- 2

**Virtual reality content "can't exist without [VFX talent], and it's a chance to keep jobs in Los Angeles," asserted Mirada's Andrew Cochrane.**



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AP

The emerging virtual reality arena "could be the saving grace" of Hollywood's struggling visual effects community, asserted **Andrew Cochrane**, interactive and new media director at **Guillermo del Toro's** Mirada Studios, during the Visual Effects Society's production summit Saturday at the W Hollywood.

He added that there are filmmaking roles that won't be as vital for VR production, but "for [the] next two to five years, it can't exist without the people in this room, and it's a chance to keep jobs in Los Angeles. There's a window right now for creative people to stake their claim. You can't outsource creativity."

*Maleficent* director, two-time Oscar-winning production designer and VFX supervisor **Robert Stromberg** — who is founder and chief creative officer of The Virtual Reality Company — agreed, saying, "It's going to be another outlet and hopefully provide more jobs for visual effects. We don't have a monetizable model yet, but I do see it taking [viewing] time from [other forms of personal entertainment such as] mobiles and cell phones."

Stromberg — who is making a [15-minute VR experience based on \*The Martian\*](#) [2] for Fox — emphasized that the community needs to come up with creative content that people will want to buy. "My goal is to get to the point where I'm directing two real actors and see how emotionally deep you can get," he added.

On the technical aspects of VR production, **Guido Voltolina**, head of presence capture for Nokia Technologies, which is developing the OZO VR camera, noted that "the [production] workflow is developing as we speak."

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But **Mark Bolas**, director of the Mixed Reality Lab and associate professor at USC School of Cinematic Arts, admitted "the part that worries me are the authors and directors; it's a very different medium, and I don't know if [all] are going to make the jump."

Meanwhile, Cochrane warned that the VFX industry needs to be realistic when bidding. "Here's the threat to VR and VFX: Everyone's under-bidding," he asserted. "It's hard [to produce]."

Most speakers seemed optimistic that VR could reach critical mass by 2020, though **Jon Goldman**, venture partner at Greycroft Partners, admitted, "I love all this stuff, but I think [it's] a slower adoption cycle, and we are still in the experimental stage.... It may take past 2020 for mass adoption."

During the summit, VFX supervisor and VES past president **Jeff Okun** was presented the VES Founders Award, in addition to VES lifetime membership and VES Fellow rank; VES past president **Carl Rosendahl** of Carnegie Mellon was named a VES lifetime member; and VFX supervisors **Richard Hollander** and **Scott Squires** were named VES Fellows.

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