

Visual Effects Society Honors Bungie

Posted by [lukems](#) at 2/11/2008 4:57 PM PST

- [Take Our Jobs...If You Dare!](#)
- Join Bungie!

The [Visual Effects Society](#) honored Bungie with an award for the "Best Real Time Visuals in a Video Game" earlier this week. CJ Cowan, the cinematics director for Halo 3 answered a few quick questions about the Visual Effects Society, their awards, and the reel that Bungie put together for consideration.

Q: CJ, there's all kinds of awards seasonally, what is the Visual Effects Society for folks who don't know?

The VES is literally composed of the inventors of computer graphics as we know them today. The voting members are comprised of special effects professionals who have been and are pioneers in the field. To be a member you need to have been an employee of the visual effects community for five years (or win a major award like an Oscar for FX) and be sponsored by two members. It was pretty surreal to be in the same company of the likes of Steven Spielberg and Dennis Muren. The awards show itself was at the Kodak Ballroom in Hollywood, complete with red carpets and black ties (although I admit to wearing a white tie with my tux 'cause that's how I *roll*).

Q: Do the respective studios have to do anything to be considered?

Yeah, in order to be put in the running for a nomination, we had to put together footage according to very strict rules and regulations. I'm talking 17 pages of rules and regulations. Steve Scott and myself were completely terrified we would be disqualified for some inane reason like shipping down the tape without rewinding it first. Once nominated, all the members of the society review the footage for all the contenders and vote for the winners.

Q: What kind of work goes into preparing the reel? How did you guys pick and choose what to include in a reel for VES?

Steve and I found out about the deadline for submission a little late, so it was a stressful week. We banged our heads quite a bit trying to decide on the most appropriate clips to show, and finally decided on three "scenes":

- Some gameplay from early on in the first level of the game, focusing on the jungle environment and flowing water.
- An edited together sequence of the Chief taking down the first Scarab in Voi and it exploding in Steve Spectacular Scott fashion.
- And a portion of the cinematic from the end of the game where the Ark is destroyed by Halo firing.

In addition to this, there was the opportunity to include "in-progress" before and after footage, so we recorded the same scenes broken out into all of their separate layers using saved films. We probably recorded 20 hours of footage before selecting the clips we wanted.

Q. What do you think this means for Video Games' greater place in the grand scheme of visual arts?

The games industry as a whole is making slow but steady progress here. This is the fourth year VES has had a video game category. But even Spielberg talked about things like video games and internet films helping to push visual arts forward. Just don't expect to see a games category at the Oscars anytime soon.

Q. Anything you'd like to add?

Yeah, I just want to say it was a true honor to be involved in this entire process. The Studio as a whole is really excited about the win! There was some very stiff competition in our category, and I have to give kudos to the other nominees.

I also want to give a shout out to the "Believe Campaign" guys who won for their beautiful diorama, and for the DamnFX guys who won for their unbelievable work on "Sea Monsters" (go see that film in 3D if you haven't already!).

Oh, and wearing a tuxedo doesn't make Harold any more classy.