

ARGO Visual Effects Supporting Statement

ARGO visual effects are essential to the success of the film as they allow director Ben Affleck to depict scenes key to a well known storyline which were not able to be filmed on actual locations or certainly not in an actual 1979 environment. We use visual effects to convince the audience that all settings are authentic and accurate for that period.

Many of the shots contain visual effects elements front and center and not subtle augmentations or background elements. Large photo-realistic components are the focus of the audience's attention. The viewer becomes completely immersed in the believability of the dramatization and would be surprised to learn that much of what they see was created using the magic of visual effects.

The Burning Flag and Embassy



This is the opening scene of the film and needed to land the viewer directly into 1979 Tehran despite the fact not a single frame was shot there – the vast majority of the film was shot in LA. The flag was burned practically on camera, but the material burned too quickly.

The entire flag was removed (quite a challenge in itself) and replaced with a digital version in post production. This detailed visual effects simulation takes into account the effects of the wind, waving of the pole and the burn rate of the different thicknesses and types of material on the flag.

All views of the embassy and compound areas are 3D computer simulations and the crowds are created and replicated from much smaller groups of people photographed as elements as well as many being 100% digital creations.

The Azadi Tower

This landmark is used in a major CGI establishing shot of the Iranian capital. The VFX artists researched 70's online imagery as the area has undergone heavy development since then and current maps were of little use. The mountain



of research was used to fine-tune an accurate 3D rendering of the tower and surrounding buildings along with matte painted cityscape backgrounds. The mantra behind this shot was 'details, details, details' - you'll see leaves moving on the trees, of-the-era cars circling the ring road, long shadows affected by the pollution haze, hundreds of aerials on the top of buildings, posters and banners, digital people going about their lives and even dirt on the camera lens. All of this helps sell the realism of the shot and maintains the grainy hand-held documentary feel the director was after.

Taking Flight – The Getaway

Towards the end of the film, a climatic set of events culminates in our team making their getaway aboard a Swiss jumbo jet. Footage that was shot at Ontario airport in California was transformed with matte paintings to show the



mountain ranges surrounding Iran. The most challenging visual effects component of these shots are the fully computer generated planes. Once again, this sequence

needed to be totally believable in a section of the film where the audience is completely wrapped up in the action. These are not close-up, fast-cutting shots where digital elements could be disguised – the planes are seen in full view and the visual effects artists had to make them utterly convincing.



Considerable time was spent researching the 747 plane model making sure the digital version matched the 70's design style. Numerous layers of shading, dirt and debris, light effects and heat distortion were fine-tuned to help bring the shots to life. The plane needed to feel 'heavy' and the visual effects team concentrated on making sure the aircraft animation and timings of the chase vehicles portray this convincingly.

ARGO is a notable example of the power of digital visual effects achieving what they arguably do best. Unlike visual effects heavy movies that use digital technology to create super powers and fantastical environments, ARGO features the very best in the use of invisible effects that are completely unnoticeable to audiences, but without which the movie could not have been made.

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