

SVFX Statement- Fantastic Mr Fox

When designing and creating the effects for 'Fantastic Mr Fox' it was critical to preserve the very distinct stop-frame and purposefully handmade style of the 'Mr Fox world'. It was important that the audience were not distracted from the story with conventional digitally created effects solutions that might jar or appear inappropriate to the films look and feel. The Director early in production established a philosophy of 'everything must feel as if it was 'shot in-camera'. The effects team worked closely with the Animation, Camera & Art Departments throughout pre-production and the shoot to create shots using practical "old school" techniques such as Pepper's ghost, mirror tricks and force perspective. When this could not be achieved in camera CGI and digital technology was employed, but with great effort to keep the technology as hidden and as light handed as possible.

One of the biggest considerations was the production of the elements: fire, smoke, dust, water, blowing leaves etc it was decided to use stop motion animation to create all these effects. With this decision made the effects team worked with the animators to produce the many elements required such as the use of cotton wool for smoke and dust, cling film for water and a series of hand carved flames created out of yellow soap for fire. These elements then had to be carefully combined by the digital artists matching the look and quality of the shots that were achieved in-camera by the animators.

The screenplay demanded some expansive sets that were too large to be practical to film, so miniature sets/skies were built and photographed as backgrounds, which were combined with full size characters shot against green screen. A good example is the attic scene when Ash rescues Kristofferson, The miniature Attic was built and photographed; the images were used as textures on a 3D CGI version of the set. This virtual attic could then provide the different angles needed for the backgrounds of the scene. This technique was used in conjunction with simpler matte painting set extensions to help create scenes like the Supermarket, Beans cider cellar and chicken shed as well as a number of moving skies and distant hills for exterior shots.

