

# NEWSDESK

## BLUE

For the past two years, visitors to 3D news sites have been stunned by stills from *Blue*, Christopher Mullins' exquisitely crafted short film. With work on the project finally complete, we talked to Mullins and assistant director Aaron Webster

### DETAILS

#### TITLE

*Blue*

**PRODUCTION COMPANY**  
A Christopher Mullins  
Production

#### DIRECTOR

Christopher Mullins

#### ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Aaron Webster

#### RUNNING TIME

23:13

#### RELEASE DATE

21 September 2003

#### URL

[www.blueshortfilm.com](http://www.blueshortfilm.com)

#### TEAM SIZE

Three

#### TIME TAKEN

2.5 years

#### SOFTWARE USED

Maya 3-5, Photoshop 5-7

### NEWS FOCUS

**3DW:** Could you summarise the themes and story of the short for those who haven't yet seen it?

**CM:** *Blue* is the story of a small work robot on an orbiting scientific research station who is unexpectedly released from his charger in the middle of the night. He toys with the equipment around him and discovers an open door to the rest of the station; a world he has never seen before, which includes a security robot who tries to hunt him down. The film is 23 minutes long, with a surprise ending.

**3DW:** A robot isolated on a desolate spacecraft, hostile killer robots – are there shades of Disney's *The Black Hole* there? What were the influences for the look and feel of the film?

**CM:** There are definitely some similarities with *The Black Hole*. Aaron and I were also heavily influenced by *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* during the design phase. And there's also a three-second homage to *Star Wars*...

**AW:** I haven't seen *The Black Hole*; I think it was released the same year as me. I'll pinpoint Ron Cobb (*Aliens*) and Doug Chiang (*Star Wars*) for style.

**3DW:** We gather you learned *Maya* practically from scratch during the making of *Blue*. Overall, do you think that creating your own project is the most rewarding way to learn the ins and outs of 3D?

**CM:** Without a doubt. To be fair, I probably never would have gotten this far without the kickstart of school, but the amount of knowledge I've gained working on this near-impossible project has proved invaluable.

**An android 'short circuits' to consciousness on a curious and hostile spacecraft in Chris Mullins' new short, *Blue***

**AW:** Maybe – it certainly forces you to learn. That said, if I'd known the ins and outs of *Maya* in the beginning, things would've looked better. I'm sure Chris had lots of fun learning that NURBS aren't the Holy Grail of 3D objects when texturing *Blue*. He eventually turned him into a meat-and-potatoes, polygon-and-UV maps robot.

enough scrapes, scratches and dirty areas to pull it away from a cartoon look.

However, the shapes and design of the characters and a lot of the props have a cartoon-like silhouette to them, which is very important. I tried to successfully combine toon with realism.

I wish that our equipment and budget allowed for the whole 23-minute film to be rendered in *mental ray* or *RenderMan* – but alas, if I'd gone down that route, we'd still be rendering today. I had to do the best I could with the standard *Maya* renderer (which, by the way, is a lot better than people think), but all in all, I'm quite satisfied with how it all came out.

**3DW:** Finally, when and where will our readers be able to see it?

**CM:** I'm submitting to as many festivals as possible. The first and only festival that has played *Blue* so far produced an amazing turn-out and the film was very well received.



**“The shapes and design of the characters in *Blue* have a cartoon-like silhouette to them. I tried to combine toon with realism.”**

Christopher Mullins, DIRECTOR, *BLUE*

**3DW:** After over two years of bringing *Blue* to life, do you hate the sight of him, or do you find it difficult to let go and say ‘it's finished’? Did your momentum ever seriously wane?

**CM:** My momentum waned all over the place. I'm very tired of sitting in a chair for hours and tired of waiting for renderings to finish, but as far as my relationship with *Blue* the character, is concerned, I feel a bit sad that it's all over.

**AW:** There's a part of me that will always want to make the project from scratch again. It's been a wondrous experience. Admittedly there was torment involved with the space station – you try modelling a huge set that's functional in concentric rings!

**3DW:** *Blue*'s characters, sets and rendering all look fabulous. How would you summarise the film's artistic style, and what, in a nutshell, are you most pleased with about it?

**CM:** I tried to capture a lot of mood through colour. The colour blue dominates the film and creates the impression of loneliness and gives it an ‘after-hours’ feel, yet during the climax of the film, the mood is overpowered by fear and alarm which is indicated not only by what's going on with the characters, but by a sudden change in the colour and lighting of the environment.

The textures are very clean and smooth, but we tried to add just

It looks like it'll make the majority of its run in 2004. Also, because festivals don't like their films to be widely publicised beforehand, I can't sell any DVDs yet. I'm currently reworking the website a bit and will be posting up-to-date news on all festival screenings around the world, as and when. So for now, I suggest that people check the site once in a while for any screenings in their area... ■

