IN THE
SPOTLIGHT

ALEN VEJZOVIC

Meet Alen Vejzovic, the Winner of our e-on Software 3D CG Competition of 2017! Today we are honored to present the following interview with him.

Alen Vejzovic is a concept artist currently residing in Gothenburg, Sweden. Here is what he has to say about his experience working as a concept artist and using VUE for creating 3D CG environments.

e-on: What is your background: When did you get started in this industry? What does your day-to-day life look like? Which software did you start on?

Alen Vejzovic: I am originally from Bosnia but have been living in Sweden for a long time now.

I studied electronics, IT systems, and have had several other courses in various subjects, but none of them had anything to do with 3D. My mother is an academic painter and my father is a professional musician so I guess I was surrounded by art from the start.

I never considered myself as being completely in the industry since 3D environment design work is more than just a job to me. I've been working with several studios this year, including Nvidia GameWorks, RedWay3D, Brainstone Studio etc., but I can't wait to get some free time to work on my personal projects.

I think the first 3D software I came in contact with was Discreet 3D studio max (before Autodesk acquired Discreet Logic and called it Autodesk 3ds max).
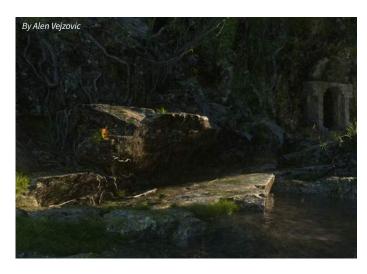
My day to day life now family, friends, work, weekends, vacations, and spending time with my 6-year-old daughter, which is always the highlight of my day.

e-on: How did you discover VUE: How long have you used VUE? Have you used or are you currently using VUE for any professional projects? What was the first project you worked on professionally and how did you use the software? How has your VUE usage changed over the year? Where did you use VUE recently and for what aspects?

Alen Vejzovic:At the Heart of the Island (Winner, 3D CG environment Competitition 2017)

AV: Ten years ago, I bought a used PC with a lot of preinstalled software. One of programs was a version of Vue. If I remember correctly, it was VUE 6. I played with it a bit - rendered a tree with some water, and that was it. I was into photoshop then, matte paintings, and concept art. I rediscovered VUE a couple of years later when working on a project for a small company (illustrations for magazines). It was a couple of concepts loosely based on the 2009 Avatar movie with floating mountains. They wanted to setup a scene in VUE 9 and render out some images from different angles. Those images were to be a base for a digital painting. The problem was that they didn't have any expertise in VUE. The lighting was off, rock materials were terrible, and render times were very long. I picked up some of the basics of VUE within a couple of days and saw the potential of the software. It took me a couple of months to really feel comfortable with VUE and its material editor, atmosphere editor, render settings, etc.

After that, I invested a lot of time in VUE, learning all the ins and outs and began using it for pretty much everything - from base plates for matte paintings to finished rendered illustrations. I've never really used VUE for animations because it was not my focus.

e: What motivated you to enter the 3D CG Environment Competition? Can you tell us more about your artwork? How did you get inspired? Were you surprised that you won?

AV: What motivated me to enter? Possible free upgrades for my VUE xStream 2015 and The PlantFactory Producer 2015 :).

I decided to enter the 3D CG Environment Competition roughly a week before submission ended. It was intense. I had been watching some "Go Pro" videos on YouTube and one of them was about canyon/gorge hiking. I was amazed by the untouched nature in the footage. I knew I didn't have too much time for thinking and planning.

I imported 3 rocks/cliffs into a scene and started duplicating and rearranging. The most important thing was composition. If you get the composition right you can get away with many things. I basically blocked the whole scene with only 3 cliffs. When I was happy with the composition, I noticed that the cliffs and rock material were very flat and uninteresting. I imported the cliffs in substance painter and opened a lot of reference photos on my other screen. I then combined a couple of scanned materials and added a lot of detail with the help of substance painters amazing masking functions and a smart Material was made. I called it Super_Rock_11 because I already had 10 super_rocks :). I made a quick "PBR" shader in VUE which made the scene look so much better. The water was done in five minutes because I had a lot of water materials from previous projects. Next, I applied one of the many custom EcoSystems I have in my VUE library on to the cliffs using still viable Solid Growth plants, and that was about it (except for some added detail in the trees, plants, and rocks that I added in the final stage). In the final two days, it was all about lighting the canyon/gorge. Lighting the scene was hard but fun to do. I could write about lighting for days so it's better not to start.

After I saw the finalists announced I was pretty sure I would be in the first three spots.

e: Which are your favorite entries from other participants?
(Check them out in our website galleries: www.e-onsoftware.com/competition/2017)

AV: I liked the first and second runner-up's the most.

e: Over the past decade, what struck you most in terms of the evolution of hardware, software, and other techniques in your domain?

AV: • Real time rendering is a game changer. To be able to edit in real time is amazing. Its quality may not be as good as the offline rendering but it's getting there.
• Substance software (Designer, Painter, and B2M) is something that has changed so many aspects of my workflow that it's now unimaginable to work without it.
• UE4 becoming free and starting a small revolution.

e: In your opinion, what has been your most important skill as an artist? What advice would you give someone who wishes to start a career in the industry?

AV: My most important skill is understanding the forms (silhouettes) and the lighting I think. A piece of advice would be to find a workflow that works for him/her as early in a career as possible. Use several software packages. Use only the strengths of a specific app and none of its weaknesses.

e: What are some of the "must haves" for a portfolio, as well as some things that potential clients may perceive as warning signs?

AV: Quality over quantity is a good rule. Concentrate on an aspect you excel at and remove everything else. Your portfolio is as strong as its weakest entry.

e: Now that the industry has become more accessible, we have seen significant growth in educational programs tailored towards 2D and 3D entertainment art. What are your thoughts on the various methods for learning? For instance, should budding artists seek out brick and mortar classrooms in a larger university, or focus on online training options? What are some drawbacks/benefits to both?

AV: I think that online training is the way to go. You take what you need at the moment and continue your work until you get stuck on something else. Then you take another training to remove any obstacles, and so on. I am writing this and thinking about the mathematic courses I attended in the past. I now only have use for 1 percent of everything I learned. In this industry, you have to move fast and learn as you go.

e: What is your favorite feature or features of VUE and what other preferred software do you usually use alongside VUE? Would you recommend VUE to other artists, and why?

AV: There are several features of VUE that I like very much. EcoSystems, atmosphere editor, material editor, interface, etc.
I would recommend VUE, and I am doing that quite often, because VUE is quite easy to start with but takes time, of course, to really master.

The other software I use alongside VUE, besides PlantFactory, depends on the project.
Right now, I am using Substance packages and Zbrush on pretty much every project.

By Alen Vejzovic

e: What was the biggest challenge you faced in your most recent projects? What was the experience like? How do you consistently get inspired? On all the shots/movies you've worked on, is there one that you're particularly proud of?

AV: The biggest challenge at the moment is recreating the Monument Valley cliffs. I've been asked, by a studio, if I could do that, and I am still in the process of figuring out the best workflow (speed vs quality).

I get inspired by beautiful sceneries with elements that have not yet been done properly in 3D. I've been stuck on the cliffs, rocks, and mountains for several years now without being completely happy with the results I get (yet).

I am proud of everything I do, no favorites :)

e: And finally, have you used or tested PlantFactory yet?

AM: Since the beginning, I've been using PlantFactory (prerelease). I think I am the only one that has three different active licenses of PlantFactory. ➟○

e-onsoftware thanks Alen Vejzovic for supporting VUE! We hope this inspired you to create. Check out – Alessandro Mancini's online portfolio at:
www.artstation.com/vejza

By Alen Vejzovic

e-on
Software