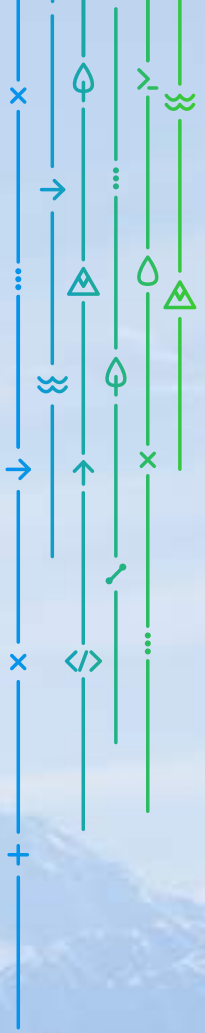# In the Spotlight

Bryan Adams

Bryan Adams is a background/sky & lighting artist working in the gaming industry. Bryan discovered his passion of skies early on and was able to learn from other artists to grow and develop his passion to where he is today.

Check out how Bryan got started in the industry, how he uses VUE to create his work, and some of the advice and inspiration he shares in this Spotlight Interview!

e-on software: What is your background?

Bryan Adams: I've been studying under the umbrella of 3D for 8 years now. I first started out wanting to go into film and VFX, but as I progressed through my courses, I started to shift towards lighting. Back in 2014, Jason Sussman (Art Director at Bungie) came to New Zealand for the *DigitalNatioNZ* tech event and offered a masterclass in environment art. It covered the general process of creating environments for Destiny. The masterclass changed my life. From that day onwards, I wanted to work as a lighting artist in the gaming industry. I've always had a passion for skies from as early as I can remember. Over the years, as I started to veer more towards skies, I began reaching out to other sky artists and learning from them. As I progressed, I learned more about incorporating my passion for skies into games.

Now, I'm a background/sky and lighting artist. I love creating skies and lighting scenes, because for me, it's extremely relaxing and rewarding. It's our responsibility to create a story that is believable beyond the playable zone. This is what I love, and it's what captivates me when I play games--the believability of the space beyond the playable zone and the questions it brings. What's beyond the horizon? What stories and experiences await? Then it starts getting technical. Why have they used these clouds? What is the weather doing in the distance? What geological formations are out there to cause these clouds? I think it's the mystery created by these skies that really pulled me into this area of expertise.
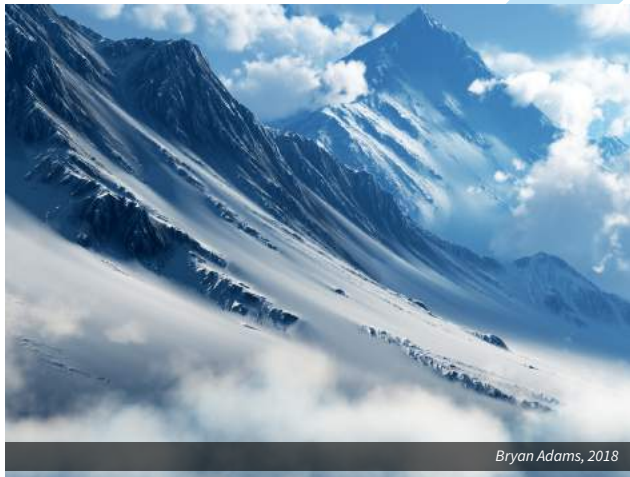
Bryan Adams, 2018

e-on software: You create a lot for the gaming industry, what is a typical day like?

BA: When I was at work, I was the only lighting artist and was responsible for a very large overhaul in the game. A typical day at work would go like this: I would come in, turn on both PCs (one render cow), grab a coffee, fire up source control, look at the overall task list, check my reviews from the art director, make a daily task list (making daily tasks really help when you have a large project because it keeps you on track and well… we all love ticking things off a list) and start working.

Throughout the day, my focus is on lighting. I would go through and change lighting setups or create new ones. I would also create new HDRIs and reflection captures, adjust the environmental settings (fog, water flow, etc.), create LUTs, and more.

Today, I am currently finishing off my bachelor's degree here in New Zealand (1 month to go). I want to become a dedicated background/sky and lighting artist, creating skies and backgrounds that captivate and awe players. I'm eager to leave New Zealand to grow and develop more by learning from the best.

e: What is your experience with VUE?

BA: I have been using VUE for 5 years, but very seriously for the past 2 years. As with any software, it does take a while to learn the ins-and-outs, limitations, and functionalities. Having some patience to really learn the software and to be willing to experiment with it, pays off in the long run.

My favorite feature is the cloud editor. I love the functionality and easy-to-use interface of the editor. It allows me to create quick turnovers for work and personal projects by showing a close approximation of the result before I solidify the shape, style, and overall render. I can do all of this by moving a few sliders.
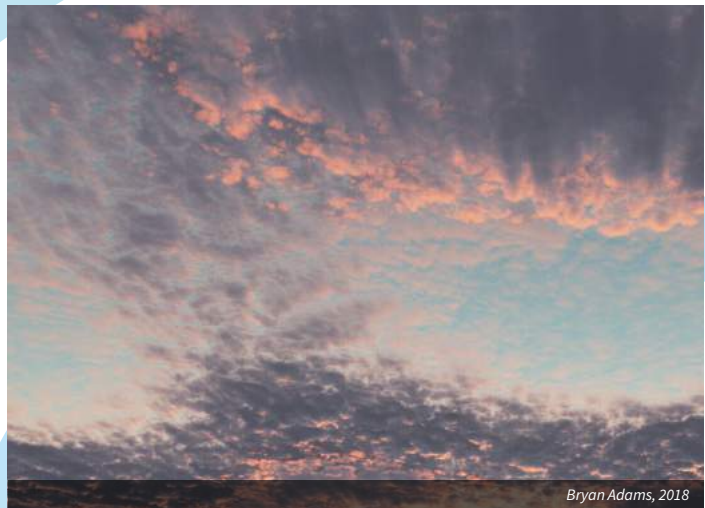
Bryan Adams, 2018

The majority of the work I did on *Path of Exile* contained skies and a few scenes created in VUE. These were quite fun to make as I ended up creating some interesting and weird skies that worked well in the most absurd places, and added that unique twist to some of the maps.

To talk more specifically about the skies in this project, and how VUE has been integrated into my workflow – any time the sky is added into the game, the fiddly, small tweaks start with all the lighting options. This is where the lighting, ambient cube map (sky), fog, and other settings come together to make a visually appealing scene. If the sky is given the OK by the art director, I go

through and render a high-quality version overnight. As the game didn't have any visible skies, most of the cube maps I created were used for ambient lighting and reflection captures. You can actually see some of the skies in the water's reflections on some of the maps. This was to add believability to the area outside of the map.

e: What was the biggest challenge you faced in one of your most recent projects? How did you overcome this challenge?

BA: As I am finishing off my bachelor's, I've just started my thesis about being a background/sky and lighting artist, and I've started to learn a lot about meteorology. I am interested in understanding, through a scientific lens, the arrangement of natural elements present in the atmosphere. By learning more about meteorology, I can apply that knowledge to my artistic skills when creating skies to add more realism to the project.

Bryan Adams, 2018

One challenge was converting scientific data and research into a usable form in VUE. However, after a lot of failed attempts, I finally did it. I know as I continue on with this thesis, there will be more challenges to overcome, but I'm determined to get through them all and create some amazing real-time skies.

e: Do you have any advice to share?

BA: Be brave. Publish your work, openly invite critique and reach out to fellow artists, including any artists of great inspiration. Grow your work, grow your passion, grow your network, never be afraid of showing your work and never give up. It's how you grow as an artist.

I get most of my inspiration from being outdoors, away from the computer, and just observing the sky and environment around me. No day is the same, and no cloud is the same. I love looking at the sky and seeing the shapes, clouds, colors and lighting; seeing how it all interacts with each other. Travelling and exploring the unknown is another activity I get my inspiration from.

e: Would you recommend VUE to other artists, and why?

BA: I do recommend artists to use VUE, and I have done so before. The clean interface, photo-realistic settings, panoramic rendering, and more, are all great features. The artist has a lot of control over the final image which adds to the unique personal flair.

Thanks Bryan! Don't forget to check out his work at:
https://www.artstation.com/delta307

Bryan Adams, Path of exile, 2018

Bryan Adams, Path of exile, 2018

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