

## VES Awards 2014 winners: British VFX firms win big at Hollywood gong show

By [Neil Bennett](#) on February 13, 2014



Despite few surprises at this year's Hollywood-based VFX and animation awards, it was a great night for Framestore, MPC and The Mill.

That *Gravity* walked away from this year's VES Awards with two armfuls of gongs was no surprise. Perhaps the only raised eyebrows were for that it didn't win every award that it was nominated for. Director's Alfonso Cuarón's disaster movie in space/validation for the existence of 3D cinema was given six VES Awards at 2014's VFX and animation awards ceremony in Hollywood last night – losing only a character design award to *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*.



*Gravity's* VFX (above and top) were created by London-based [Framestore](#). Though featuring more than their fair share of explosive destruction, their power comes less from jumpy surprises and more from the armrest-clenching tension built by showing you what's going to inevitably crash into what Sandra Bullock's standing on or attached to – and what she's going to get crushed by or carried off into space by if she doesn't get out of the way quickly. Masterful use of stereoscopic 3D makes you acutely aware of the relative distance between the hurtling debris and our heroes, and the trajectories they are on, building your anticipation of what going to happen like the best disaster movies.

[Read our report on Gravity's VFX by Framestore.](#)



Another Soho-based company picking up a gong was [MPC](#), for *The Lone Ranger* (above). While *Gravity* won the Outstanding Visual Effects in a Visual Effects-Driven Feature Motion Picture gong – most VES Awards have names that are longer than Oscar thank-you speeches as they offer a level of specificity in what they’re recognising beyond even the Grammys – MPC’s Gary Brozenich was a co-winner of the Outstanding Supporting Visual Effects in a Feature Motion Picture.

The distinction is that *Gravity*’s award is for a film where the VFX are core to the film’s plot, whereas *The Lone Ranger*’s effects are more to ground the film in reality – well, as much reality as you’re going to get in a big budget remake of *The Lone Ranger* with Jonny Depp as Tonto. MPC’s London and Vancouver studio’s worked alongside California-based [ILM](#) – which next year will likely count as part of the Soho VFX scene after it opens a London facility in April.

**Watch behind-the-scenes videos on MPC and ILM’s VFX work on *The Lone Ranger*.**

*Gravity* and *The Lone Ranger* are both nominated for the VFX Oscar next month’s Academy Awards, where *Gravity* will win (c’mon, it’s a no-brainer).

The big loser on the night could be said to be *Pacific Rim*, which was up for sing gongs but lucked out on all of them – but to lose out to *Gravity* is nothing to be ashamed about.



*Frozen* (above) won all four of its nominations: Outstanding Animation in an Animated Feature Motion Picture, Outstanding Animated Character in an Animated Feature Motion Picture, Outstanding Created Environment in an Animated Feature Motion Picture and Outstanding FX and Simulation Animation in an Animated Feature Motion Picture.

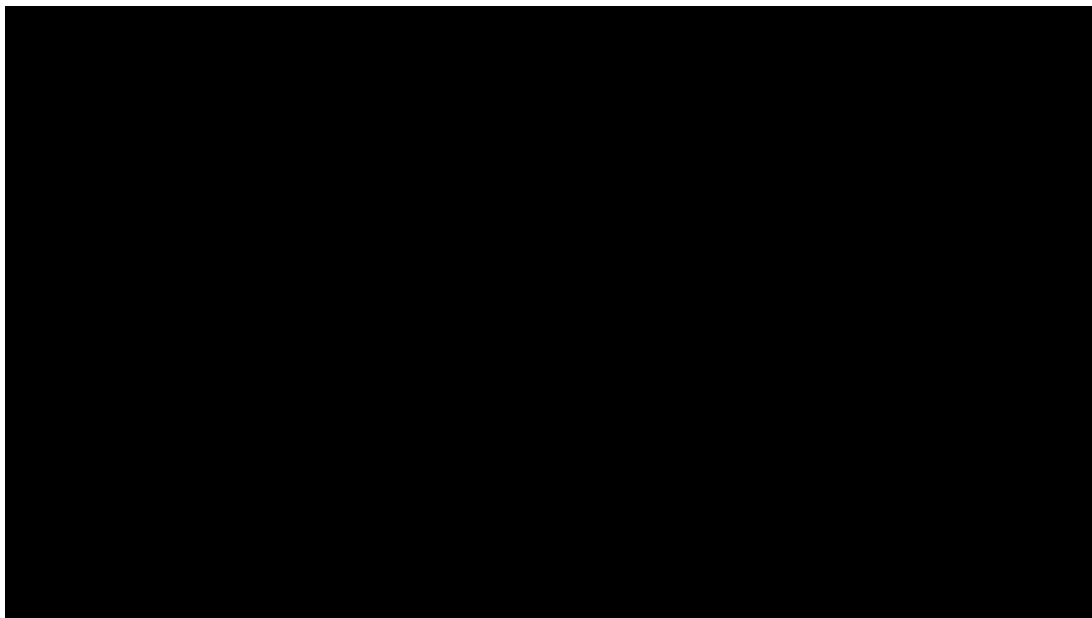
Disney’s fairytale has won acclaim for stronger female characters than the company’s classics and is the frontrunner for the Animated Film Oscar. Unless it’s pipped by Hayao Miyazaki’s final anime for Studio Ghibli, *The Wind Rises*.

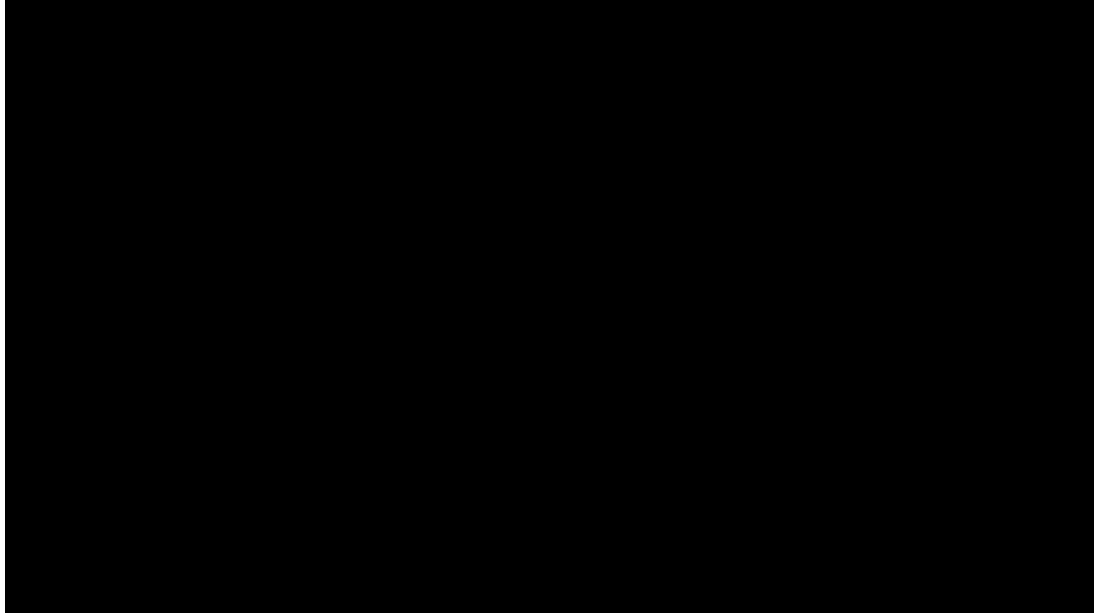




Like last year, *Game of Thrones* (*above*) was the overall winner in the TV Awards, picking up three gongs and only missing out on one. On the commercials side, Peta's *98% Human* – which features VFX work by [Mill+](#), the commercials production and post arm of The Mill, which has offices in London, New York, LA and Chicago. The American commercial was produced through the BBDO NY ad agency, but was directed by Brit Angus Kneale.

Watch Peta's *98% Human* and a behind-the-scenes look at its creation *below*.





The ceremony also saw *Gravity* director pick up the Visual Effects Society's Visionary Award, a tribute to VFX pioneer Ray Harryhausen and a Lifetime Achievement Award for John Dykstra, who's worked on films from *Star Wars* to *Django Unchained*.