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VES Releases First-Ever VFX Software Reference Platform

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The Visual Effects Society (http://www.visualeffectssociety.com/) has just announced its involvement in a groundbreaking project: the creation of a reference platform for VFX software development. Called, quite simply, the 'VFX Reference Platform (http://www.vfxplatform.com/),' its purpose is to minimize incompatibilities between different VFX software packages and encourage further adoption of Linux by VFX software vendors.

Some background on the project from the VFX Reference Platform website:

"VFX and animation studios typically integrate off the shelf digital content creation (DCC) tools, such as Maya or Houdini, with in-house software and other 3rd party packages to create a connected end-to-end pipeline for their artists. Since the late 90's an increasing number of studios have started running a flavour of Linux as their primary OS for artist workstations for reasons of reliability, flexibility, cost, performance and as a natural progression from SGI's IRIX.

Due to the flexibility of the Linux platform, there are a number of different distributions on varying release schedules and this combines with software vendors all having their own schedules to create a situation where DCC software packages are often released with different and incompatible dependencies. This complexity results in VFX studios requiring specialist expertise to integrate a pipeline around these dependencies or often even deciding against supporting Linux altogether."

The VFX Reference Platform is a first-of-its-kind collaboration between numerous VFX software solutions providers and the VES. According to Chris Vienneau of Autodesk, the collaboration represents a big step forward. "For the past year, the VES has been collaborating with Autodesk and other software vendors to create a reference Linux platform to address the endemic hassle of 'version-itis.' We're thrilled the VES is taking the lead to rally both the visual effects community and vendors on the Linux platform to organize this working group and benefit all of our customers," he said.

The first version of the platform, Calendar Year 2014 (http://www.vfxplatform.com/) (CY2014) has been published and is available online. Next year's version, CY2015 (http://www.vfxplatform.com/), is available in draft form; feeback is invited from developers and studios. The final version of CY2015 will be published in August and announced at SIGGRAPH 2014 (http://s2014.siggraph.org/) in Vancouver, Canada.

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