

March 2011

Client: **Method Studios**  
Industry: **Game**  
Products: **V-Ray for Maya**

## Halo: Reach “Deliver Hope”

“ Here at Method we have been using V-Ray for Maya since the beginning of its development. It has had huge success in house for feature and commercial work large and small. Having multiple renderer support inhouse it’s a head to head vs match to final only the best images. ”

**method**

Interview with  
Scott Metzger

**2 THE STORYTELLERS**  
Brief information about the company / the 3D artist, who realized the project.

**3 THE INSPIRATION**  
Project information, people involved, workflow, reasons to choose V-Ray.

**4 THE BACKSTAGE EXPERIENCE**  
Technical knowledge base and experience, challenges, problems and advantages.

**6 CUSTOMER BENEFITS**  
Lessons learned, favorable moments, possible features to be added to V-Ray.



**PDPLAYER**

Chaos Group  
e-mail: [marketing@chaosgroup.com](mailto:marketing@chaosgroup.com)  
[www.chaosgroup.com](http://www.chaosgroup.com)

## The Storytellers

Client: **Method Studios**

**METHOD STUDIOS IS A FAMOUS POST PRODUCTION FACILITY HEADQUARTERED IN LA WITH OFFICES IN LONDON AND NEW YORK. WOULD YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT IT AND IN PARTICULAR ABOUT YOURSELF?**

Method has definitely been spreading itself around lately. I sometimes forget how time can pass so quickly. The first job I was a part of for Method was a Sony Playstation 2 commercial called Playstation 9. If remember correctly, it was rendered in either in either Alias or Maya version 1. Mental Ray wasn't available for Maya and there definitely was no such thing as V-Ray yet. This was in the year 2000.

**HOW ABOUT THE TEAM BEHIND THE PRODUCTION OF HALO: REACH "DELIVER HOPE"?**

Outside of Method you had Bungie, Agency215, and Noam Murro who was the Director. Inside Method you have Dan Glass leading the herd along with fast moves Matt Dessero, and Dan Seddon who was the CG supervisor of the Halo commercial along with entire Method team of talented artists, software developers, and producers.

**YOU ARE SPECIALIZED IN VISUAL EFFECTS SERVICES AND YOUR PORTFOLIO IS REALLY ABUNDANT. A SHORT TIME AGO THE SUPER BOWL SPOT YOU MADE WITH THE BEAVER HAD GAIN GREAT POPULARITY. CAN YOU SHARE MORE ABOUT YOUR LATEST PROJECTS?**

The Beaver was a fantastic spot for Bridgestone and rendered 100 percent in Houdini with Mantra using out of the box Houdini power for fur rendering, and Maya for Animation. The bridge was rendered in

### Highlights

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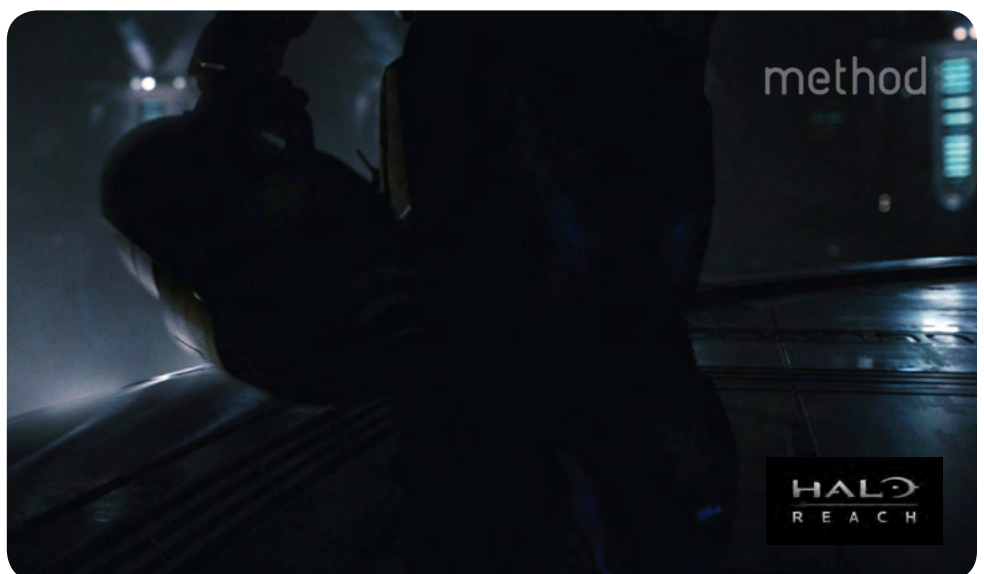
water. Latest projects finished in V-Ray were: Cadillac Arrows, HP Island, Droid X, and Harley Davidson Cages.

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## The Inspiration

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**HALO: REACH "DELIVER HOPE" IS AN EMOTIONAL LIVE-ACTION TRAILER WITH STUNNING EFFECTS AND AWESOME ANIMATION, RECENTLY ACKNOWLEDGED WITH VES AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING VISUAL EFFECTS. CAN YOU SHARE MORE FROM 'THE KITCHEN' OF THE PROJECT?**

Are you trying to taste what I'm cooking here? With a commercial production this large you pretty much have to raid the pantry. That includes using grandma's fine china plates. The main course for this commercial was Maya and Houdini. Grilling was done by Nuke and Flame. Then for desert Artists had the choice between 3 Renderers to use on Halo. Renderman, Mantra, or V-Ray.

**WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN CREATING THIS TRAILER? IS THERE A FUNNY OR A MEMORABLE MOMENT WHICH YOU WILL NEVER FORGET?**

The memorable moment for me was rendering with a shit ton of displacement maps. Then turning on GI, motion blur, DOF and have it render at 2k.

### Highlights

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V-Ray would flex, bend, and bounce right back after one serious beating, then ask for more!! The hardest challenge was taking game models assets from Bungie and throwing it outside a game engine. Sub-D's and high textures need a lot of attention and you have a short time to complete this yet trying to please everyone while running to the finish line.

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**WHAT WAS THE TIMEFRAME FOR COMPLETING THE WHOLE 3D PRODUCTION?**

If I remember correctly, there was 1.5 months of preproduction, then 2 months of post production.

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## The backstage experience

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**YOU HAVE TRUSTED V-RAY FOR MAYA SINCE ITS EARLY BETA STAGE AND MOST OF THE ARTISTS IN METHOD HAVE ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED IN ITS DEVELOPMENT WITH FEEDBACK AND IDEAS. HOW DO YOU FIND THE GROWTH OF THIS RENDER ENGINE AND WHAT HAS BEEN IMPROVED SINCE THE FIRST DAYS?**

Even in the earliest stages of beta, V-Ray for Maya was still 1000 times more productive than anything you could have rendered in for Maya. I could never get over how such a beautiful image could be achieved so quickly with such a wonderful toolset for Maya.

**DID YOU FIND IT EASY AND SATISFYING WORKING WITH V-RAY IN ANIMATED PICTURE?**

The only picture I know is a moving one. Stills can be great, but the real challenge is getting that image moving without render issues. Some renderers have too much noise, some can't have AO with motionblur, and some just have way too many dependencies for rendering that require way too much support to be considered cost effective in today's economy. I found the best way to keep things easy is to not over complicate things when using V-Ray. For fresh starters coming from Mental Ray or Renderman I definitely think speed and ease of use is very appealing.

**HOW ABOUT THE V-RAY MATERIALS - DID YOU FIND THEM CAPABLE ENOUGH FOR CREATING PHOTO-REALISTIC AND NON REALISTIC MATERIALS AT THE SAME TIME?**

Who would have thought just a few shaders could go so far? You have all the control you would need for 90 percent of the time. The other 10 percent? Well it goes like this. You log into the Chaos Group

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**HAVE YOU USED BIG AMOUNT OF RENDER ELEMENTS FOR POST PRODUCTION? WHICH WERE THE MOST USEFUL ONES?**

Render Elements for V-Ray are by far the best. What makes it the best in my opinion is the consistency of the shader math. When delivering a V-Ray render to compositors there is no room for error in how the renderer relays that shader math. You have so many different methods to choose, but what I usually start off with is Reflect, Spec, Refraction, Lighting, GI, and Self ILUM. When those render elements plus, they match the beauty 100 percent. It is pure visual communication between 3D artists and compositors. The days of working inefficient with 50+ render layers for compositing are over.

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## The backstage experience

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### DID YOU USE THE DISTRIBUTED RENDERING OR THE NETWORK RENDERING ABILITIES THAT V-RAY HAS? WHAT WAS THE AVERAGE RENDER TIME PER FRAME OF THE ANIMATED SHOTS IN THE MOVIE?

I was hoping to actually keep this a secret. But since you brought it up, I guess we can talk about it. But first I just wanted to say that Distributed RT is going to piss off a lot of people. The speed improvements are soo great that it really does raise the bar for artist time and expectations. Instead of spending a few days to look dev, it can take a few hours with RT and it only gets better from here on. There will be people who hate V-Ray for this one reason. Sitting in a Flame bay with a V-Ray station loaded with juice will now become a reality for hourly Flame work for commercial clients. This would not have been possible with before. What renders out of RT matches non interactive renders on the farm 100 percent.

### HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE SO FLAWLESS COMBINATION BETWEEN REAL FOOTAGE AND CG ELEMENTS AND ENVIRONMENTS?

Well I work with a great group of talented artists, and supervisors. Dan Glass has an impeccable eye, along with Matt Dessero pushing all the right compositing buttons. Dan Seddon was a fantastic CG supervisor who actually being a Renderman guru helped shape a lot of the feature requests that are now placed in V-Ray. Masa Narita did the Norble 6 Zbrush modeling and is by far one of the best modelers I have ever had the chance of working with. The other V-Ray artists stepping up to the plate on Halo were Alex Lee and Kerry Graham who have much love for V-Ray.

### DID YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE V-RAY STEREOSCOPIC ABILITIES?

While Halo was not required in stereo we made a stereo version including rendering stereo V-Ray and it looks awesome! I couldn't stop bringing every artist into the 3D stereo area of Method to witness this. Everyone at Method is very passionate about stereo rendering, and good conversion. Like a good steak cooked right.

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### ANY OTHER V-RAY FEATURES USEFUL FOR THE WORKING PROCESS OF THE MOVIE?

One very useful feature that I don't give enough credit to is the spherical camera for rendering a 360 degree latlong. It was nice to hand something over quick for other artists to use for mixing renders and assets from Houdini/Renderman to Maya/V-Ray. Render elements from V-Ray are also another fantastic feature that made a difference and will make a difference for anyone, anywhere, at any time. After using render passes in Mental Ray for Maya with contribution maps, I do have to wonder what they were smoking when they came up with that process. V-Ray has a very logical approach.



## Customer Benefits

Client: **Method Studios**

### HOW DO YOU ESTIMATE V-RAY IN TERMS OF RENDERING SPEED IN THE WHOLE PROJECT?

Considering what features you get to turn on, along with image control, there is nothing on the market that can come close to V-Ray. Distributed RT, Physical Camera, Mipmap tiled EXR textures, Ptex, Geometry proxies. You could create anything in record times with fantastic results.

### WHAT WOULD YOU RECOMMEND ADDING IN FUTURE VERSIONS OF V-RAY?

I think ptx baking from selected objects and multiple objects would be a very nice addition. Not to forget lens effects and anamorphic flares. I love the light select render element, but would definitely like something more close to Multilight. It's fantastic to see Chaos Group developing V-Ray for so many packages. Only I have this one small problem. My friends with Houdini can't experience the same rush from using V-Ray that I feel. I would love to see a version of V-Ray interfacing with Houdini in all the complicated networked magic that they have grown to love.

### ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE OVERALL RESULT AND WHAT KNOWLEDGE DO YOU FIND IMPORTANT TO BE SHARED TO OTHER 3D ARTISTS WHO ALSO USE V-RAY?

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It's really important to be inspired and explore new technologies. Exploring the physical world with fine detail definitely has value when synthesizing images. With that being said, V-Ray will open opportunities for artists that other renders are inefficient at. Having worked with Mental Ray and Renderman over the years, I sometimes find it important to throw the old hacks and workarounds of doing something out the window. With V-Ray a lot of things you worked hard to achieve are actually a lot less complicated in V-Ray. You just need to

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view things with a different perspective, and perhaps even a different idea for workflow. What you are used to from 10 years ago will definitely be different now.

### CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOME OF THE UPCOMING PROJECTS AT METHOD STUDIOS YOU WILL RELY ON V-RAY FOR RENDERING?

Some feature work in the past with V-Ray for Maya include Percy Jackson and the

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Lightning Thief, Nightmare on Elmstreet New Nightmare, Gulliver's travels, and I'm Here by Spike Joneze. For future projects I am not at liberty to tell, but I can definitely say that a lot of feature work, and a majority of commercials are very V-Ray dominating. Once this V-Ray fever spreads, everyone will be infected and the only cure will be more cow bell.

#### Highlights

*Some feature work in the past with V-Ray for Maya include Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief, Nightmare on Elmstreet New Nightmare, Gulliver's travels, and I'm Here by Spike Joneze.*



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