



SMPTE Spotlight:

Stefan Albertz

BY RUSSELL POOLE

CURRENT POSITION:

Professor of 3D Animation and Visual Effects

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

SMPTE, FK TG

DEGREES:

Dipl. Engineer Media Technology

3D animation and visual effects continue to make great strides as technology improves. Because these mediums are ever-evolving, the engineers and technologists involved must be adaptable to keep up in the industry. One of these adaptable leaders is Professor Stefan Albertz in Bielefeld, Germany. Not only is Albertz a dedicated educator at Hamm-Lippstadt University of Applied Sciences, but he’s also a world-renowned expert in the fields of 3D animation and visual effects.

“When I learned computer graphics and animation in Germany back in the 90s, our communication channels and sources of information were quite limited,” said Albertz when asked how he got his start in the industry. “Knowledge came by reading books and watching tutorial DVDs. By then, I learned remotely from people like Habib Zargarpour, John Berton, and John Lasseter. Both ILM and Pixar impressed me with their work and highly influenced my career direction.”

At the start of his career, Albertz was allowed to learn on the job, as he was selected to work on an SGI Octane with



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both Softimage and Maya Unlimited software. Soon after, he received training from Alias|Wavefront, a Canadian software company in Munich. There, he learned the tricks of the visual effects trade and how to be an effective teacher.

“Alias|Wavefront user meetings were often graced by special guest chief scientist Bill Buxton,” said Albertz. “His way—or shall I say style—of teaching is funny, entertaining, and, at the same time, able to distill complex subjects into understandable information. At that point in time, my professorship was not even on the horizon, but he had a huge influence on my way of teaching.”

Albertz’s professional career is marked by significant contributions that have shaped the industry. He played a pivotal role in Germany’s first 3D documentary, Wim Wender’s Oscar-nominated *Pina* and was a key contributor to the SMPTE Interoperable Master Format. His work on *The Hobbit Trilogy*, where he was part of the small group in extending the DCI specifications for 3D HFR content, was a testament to his innovative spirit and dedication to pushing the boundaries of the field.

“When I started my job as a product manager at Rohde & Schwarz, I quickly became aware of the international character of that job,” said Albertz. “SMPTE crossed my way early in that new position. Some colleagues of my development team were already members, and I learned the benefits of the Society. It was also the SMPTE network that connected me to Jan Froehlich and Wolfgang Ruppel—my now student chapter co-advisors.”

Albertz created the SMPTE German Student Chapter with Froehlich and Ruppel and is a member of SMPTE’s Rapid Industry Solution initiative, specifically with On-Set Virtual Production. He and his university are planning and constructing an immersive multipurpose LED stage (IML-Stage). It features two LED walls, LED lighting, medical-grade full body and facial motion capture, a cinema camera and lens kit, and object-based audio and is connected to the university’s solar photovoltaic plant. The project contractor, ICT AG, is the same company that provided and operated LED stages for the Academy Award-winning film *Poor Things*, so everyone involved is very excited about the development.

“The idea of our IML-Stage is the creation of a state-of-the-art learning and research environment for our stu-

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dents and all interested professionals,” said Albertz. “In my current role as professor and SMPTE student chapter advisor, I want to continue to provide up-to-date knowledge and my working experience to my students, helping them to evolve their skills and find their favorite topics. One of the next steps is setting up our new international bachelor’s degree program for creative media technology.”

Professor Stefan Albertz has received numerous accolades for his work as a 3D animator, visual artist, and educator. In an ever-evolving field, he understands the importance of staying current and planting seeds for the future. Albertz echoes this sentiment: “If my students remember me as someone who helped them to take a few steps, to enable them and push their horizons, I’ve achieved my goal—and I hope I can continue this work for a long time.”

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