

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**October 16, 2008**

**Picture Mill** designed and produced the animated end titles for *Max Payne*, opening nationwide Friday October 17th. Based on the series of popular third-person shooter video games, the film is brought to life by John Moore with Mark Wahlberg playing the title character of a revenge-driven cop. *Max Payne* is Picture Mill's fourth project with the director.

Emphasizing Max's shotguns and unique multi-caliber Taurus P38 "Judge" pistol along with his partner Mona's MP-5 automatic, the Picture Mill design team, headed by David Clayton, developed story boards focused on the details and textures of the weapons. They are featured as seductive close-ups in a black void, to focus on the power and intensity of the guns. Slick choreographed camera moves take the viewer from weapons to weapon.

"It's a little fetish-y, we admit," says Creative Director William Lebeda. "But there is something really sexy and powerful about seeing Max's guns in tiny glimpses and fragments, rather than the whole weapon at once."

Another feature of the sequence comes straight from the film and the video game itself. "*Max Payne* was one of the first games to use a 'bullet-time' effect to slow down the action at critical moments. John does it throughout the film, and we felt that this is a signature of the character and the franchise as a whole," says Lebeda.

"Plus, its just really stinking cool." chuckles Clayton.

Once John Moore approved the boards, Picture Mill's in-house CGI department began to visualize the sequence. It was decided that the sequence would be entirely CG, since the intent was for the camera to move as the weapons were firing, which would be virtually impossible due to safety issues and the limitations of 35mm camera equipment. However, many of the muzzle flares, smoke elements and other environmental details were sourced from filmed elements.

Toy guns were use to visualize how each move could work. "We spent an evening twisting and turning the toys around in the air as we discussed weapons sequences from some of our favorite films," says Bryan Thombs, Picture Mill 3d artist and Lighting TD.

The design team photographed and videotaped the actual guns used in the film for reference. Once all that reference materials were collected, the 3D team began the meticulous process of modeling and texturing each gun using Maya and Photoshop. Rather than have pristine, beautiful, show room floor guns, Picture Mill decided to make each weapon look like it had been thru war. Scratches, nicks and scrapes were purposefully painted on areas like the muzzle end, trigger guard and places where you

would find a lot of wear and tear. A library of textures was put together by Paul Parker and utilized by the team to create a consistent look. This was a time consuming process that pushed the rendering of these guns to the next level.

As the process continued, Picture Mill's in-house editorial would take the shots from 3d and cut together a sequence incorporating the signature style that John Moore was bringing to the movie. The "bullet-time" motion would be developed at this stage. Most of the 3d was provided as over-cranked, flat shaded animatics so editorial could speed ramp quickly and then play the shot in a slow motion effect as needed. Retimed shots would go back to 3D to be matched for timing to eliminate the need for hundreds of rendered frames to be discarded. "As much as this is a CG sequence, it was really up to Kye Krauter, Picture Mill's in-house editor, to bring it together," says Clayton. "He really shaped the pace and overall rhythm of the sequence."

Each shot averaged around 180 frames in length and rendered using Mental Ray with motion blur. The motion blur is setting is often the first setting to disable when trying to improve render times, but we feel that's one of the key attributes to have when trying to achieve realistic cgi, especially for 2k film effects, says Thombs. "We optimized our render settings to allow us to render with motion blur, blurred reflections and still have the times be in the range of 10 minutes a frame."

Picture Mill worked closely with the feature editor Dan Zimmerman to determine the rhythm going into the credit sequence and adjusting the music to fit the choreography of the sequence. "Picture Mill is fantastic to work with. The creativity, positive attitude and attention to detail makes them a must use company. I am extremely blown away every time they are on my projects. It was a great experience, as always!" says Zimmerman.

The final step of compositing brought all the elements together including the all-important muzzle flashes and interactive lighting on the weapons and text. Compositors Nelson Yu and Jon Wolfe split the sequence in half at the title, to efficiently work with the tight five-week schedule. Interactive lighting was timed in the renders to match the 2d muzzle flashes and a 3d camera was generated with locators to track the position of the flashes for the final composite in After Effects.

3D artist Jon Block created a variety of 3d smoke, ember and fire elements that would be integrated in the composite either as environmental effects or specific to an individual gun. "After seeing how Kye was adding speed changes to certain shots we were a bit worried on how we were going to be able to affect those same changes to the particles and fluids. But with a little hard work, and careful planning, we had no trouble," said Block. The effects were created in Maya using fluids and ended up becoming that icing on the cake for the whole piece.

The first part of the sequence featured the “aftermath” of the movie... fire, shattered glass, and explosive fireballs. “John Moore showed us a ton of ultra-high speed tests they shot for the film. The gasbag explosions were just stunning in their scale. Those high speed elements became a big component of the first half of the sequence,” says Clayton. “Stock footage just wasn’t going to cut it in this sequence.”

“Part of our production process was layering effects plates together to create a completely new explosion or visual effect. And then retiming them to have more explosive energy,” said Clayton. “When that wasn’t enough, then we started augmenting the shots with cg elements and interactive lighting on the credits”.

“Something that we noticed right away in the footage of the film is that there is always particles in the air. Sometimes ash, sparks, or snow, depending on the scene. But always something. Its another signature of the film we wanted to be part of the end credits,” says Lebeda. “And it gave us a nice opportunity to integrate the names into the same world as the weapons... Because when it’s all said and done, it is a credit sequence.”

John Moore, appropriately, has the last word. “I knew it would be great, but the final credits are beyond my expectations... the team at Picture Mill are sick bastards. I can’t wait to work with them again.”

***Max Payne*** opens nationwide Friday October 17, 2008

### About **Picture Mill**

Picture Mill is an award-winning, full-service creative design company, specializing in motion design and live-action production.

Located in the heart of Hollywood, Picture Mill’s work encompasses projects for motion pictures and television, from Steven Spielberg’s *War of the Worlds* to the Emmy-nominated *Pushing Daisies*. Their most recent projects include a number of commercials for *Citibank*.

Creative Director: William Lebeda

Art Director: David Clayton

Producer: Christina Hwang, Justin Greenlee

Designers: Luca Giannettoni, Ken Pelletier

3D Lead: Bryan Thombs

3D Animators: Jon Block, Billy Maloney, Paul Parker, Herman Kim, Jennifer Sata

2D Compositors: Jon Wolfe, Nelson Yu, Ryan Levitus