



SYG.MA

The post-production in Russia is a territory of versatile artists.



Apollinary Zakharov on a Grand Canyon overlook point.

*Why is it difficult to build a career in America in a common sense of the word? How to film movies in the US, and what is a difference in conditions of work in Russian post-production and the American, Mikhail Khokhlov asked*

*the leading domestic VFX Artist Apollinary Zakharov. He worked with Alexei German, Timur Bekmambetov, Vladimir Khotinenko, Sergei Bodrov, 30 films and many clips. Now Apollinary has an open contract with the largest advertising house Mustache Agency, located in New York.*

## **Alone**

Russia looks for a specialist who knows how to do everything and knows how to earn money with a movie. In addition to the main specialty, he must have a general idea of filmmaking. Estimation work time, staff, the technical equipment of the studio - no one cares. Two persons within 2 months make 20 clips for a New Year TV Show for the channel "Russia", and the cartoon "Nosferatu. The horror of the Night "I did alone, 6 months without leaving the studio. At this speed of production suffers the quality of work and the health.



"Make the restaurant the colors of luxury" - said the director of "Nosferatu". So I couldn't get such quality as like as Pixar.

## **Who is guilty?**

But, in Russia, I learned to offer. So if I understand that the studio does not have enough budget, time or anything else for a good quality then I need to figure it out how to complete the work with the provided materials and money.

*You have to offer versions to the client for his understanding of what he really wants and how it can look in the end. In Russia, the artist is responsible for the product. Success is always collective, and failure is yours. This is the tradition, such business in the system of deficit economy.*

It's different in America. You always get a clear assignment. And you can not produce on your own. You will look strange because before you start the work everything is clearly planned. Well sometimes you can offer something, but it should be discussed. The deadline can be broken in the US. And work problems may appear. But you should not hide them from the supervisor or try to solve them yourself. But if you have enough experience to see the troubles before, you will even be awarded. In the US, rather than in Russia people will not blame somebody, but will try to solve the situation through joint efforts.

### **A trash in shot**

There is a script. For example, in the clip "Alright" Kendrick Lamar half the time had to fly and fall from the unbelievable height. All the tricks were modded by our team. This is the case when the amount of work on postproduction is justified by the plot. But there is another approach. For some reason, it is believed that a bad makeup easier to clean on post-production, and what is not exist, add with 3D modeling. Previously, such cases were a lot in Russia, now it happens in the US.



Clip "Alright" of American rapper Kendrick Lamar got the Video of the Year at the MTV Video Music Awards 2015.

Recently I was doing a commercial for an American company that deals with bitcoins. A shot from the helicopter. And the platform below was dirty like after an explosion. But it should be a forest. Okay, I covered everything with trees.



In the film "Legend №17" the stadium was filled by fans in post-production

One operator told me that when he stopped the camera because the second director came into the frame, he was nearly fired. Like, in post-production everything can be removed. I believe that this is not always true. Of course, you can smooth out wrinkles, and add Sun. But the fewer graphics in the image, the more natural it looks. And now it becomes a trend to make over perfect pictures.

*The importance of post-production has grown so much that it replaces the work of traditional film professionals.*



In historical films details are important. A modern road sign was removed at the postproduction stage.

### **What you can learn in the smoking room**

Working in Russia I'm not limited by any conditions. Especially if it's about the beauty works - in the digital facial cleanup, I'm not given any assignments at all: "Just make it beautiful" and that's it. No references. Sometimes there is a rather artistic description of the problem. In the last video of Filipp Kirkorov, I had to create a clock, inside which the action goes. The description was rough as follows: "This is a watch that reflects the state of the person's soul at the time of breaking up with a loved one. A little old little broken, with a stained glass and a pattern on the dial... ". And on the basis of this conversation I create a variant of design. For example, I know that we were shooting at Bolsheokhtinsky Bridge, and behind the singer's back we have to draw some American metropolis, so the size of the clock should be appropriate for high-rise buildings. Everything else is done by trial and fail. How to do, we usually discuss with the artist in smoking rooms.

### **Deadlines**

I never argue with a client. But in Russia, I learned to guess what he wants. Probably, this is talent. In America, it helps me to do the work, in Russia to get a deal.

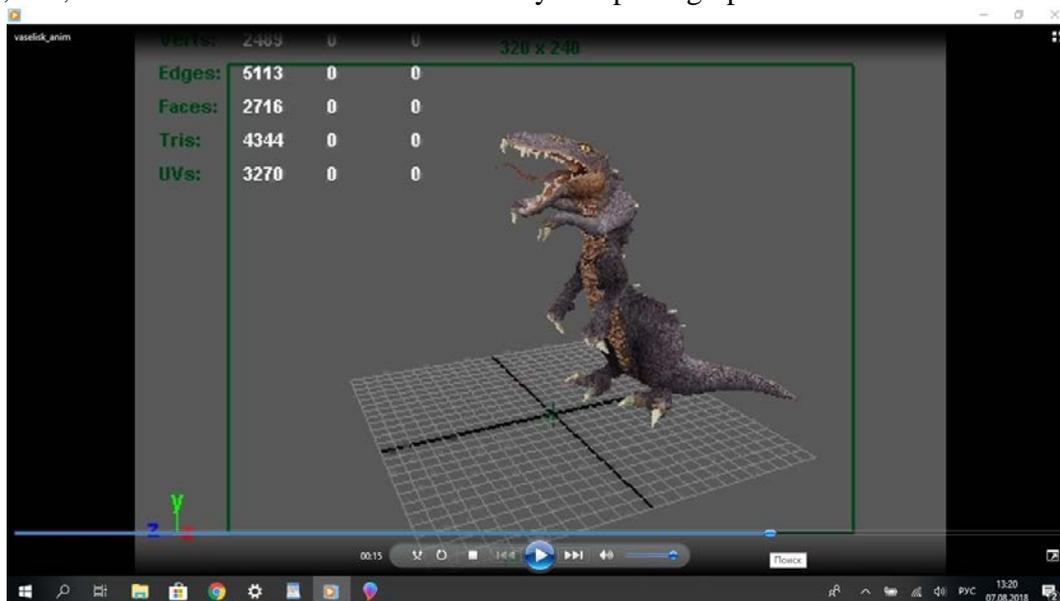
In the US, companies are preparing for the project for six months before. In Russia - for a month. Often work can be offered when the time has already passed. So it was needed yesterday but the budget has wasted and needs to find some people to finish the project quickly.

*In America, HR policy depends on the problem, and in Russia on the budget.*

Therefore, we are all very different. If the project in the United States does not have the opportunity to invite an artist, composer, animator, modeler, programmer, supervisor - it simply won't happen.

### About specialization

In Russia, it is almost always assumed that you can do everything alone. Therefore, all our specialists are multifunctional. In Hollywood, work on any project is divided into parts. Each part can be performed by some people. Despite the fact that I have been doing postproduction for 20 years, the digital cleanup and compositing I do better, than modeling and 3D animation. In the USA, VFX Artists, that is the artists of visual effects, works on particles - water, fire, smoke - in Russia such artists do any computer graphics.



Half the pages of Apollinary's student's notebooks were filled with strange animals. Now for million viewers, he draws "real" dinosaurs.

### Who works in staff

For example, ILM which made visual effects in the films Indiana Jones, Star Wars, Mummy, Harry Potter, has 20 to 30 major managers, supervisors and accounting in staff. Artists, that do graphics and effects - all who deal with post-production - are freelancers. They would be invited for a month or half a year for a specific project. Hundreds of specialists.

*Russian companies have regular roto-paint artists, modelers, animators, composers ... And they do all the work coming in. The quality depends on how many hands they have.*

The level of Russian specialists now fully corresponds to the world one. But the system of organizing their work is completely different than on the West.



Carlson has excellent flying skills.

### **What influences career and reputation**

I have some experience at Hasbro, then in the Mustache Agency(NY). Recruitment of specialists for projects in these companies is organized using the database, which they create over the years. Having passed a lot of tests, with all legal taxes, numbers, recommendations, description of the experience and marital status, you'll be added to a database. Building a career depends on the number of projects, and a reputation is based on the reviews of supervisors.



Appolinary Zakharov animated the Monopoly Man for Hasbro TV commercials. His next project is the visualization of the next season of Star Trek.

Thus, after completing the work, you guarantee the next proposals. And here is the process. After a producer has calculated how much artists he needs, the company sends me and a few more experts another a proposal. As like as Uber. If I accept, I automatically get a detailed description in an e-mail, also links to source materials, work schedules, financial information and methods of communication - absolutely all the conditions! So a team is built in different countries of the world, which able to do any task of any complexity. Google works similarly. They have a huge number of freelance programmers. They write reports, point to the errors. As a result, the company receives a fully tested product. I hope such a system will soon be applied in Russia. It is very effective in my opinion.