

# ALLEGRO CL<sup>®</sup> @Work!

A Franz Inc. Customer Success Story

## Lights...Camera...Animation

Phantom by Square USA Inc. keeps their new Computer-Generated Film on time and on budget.

Square USA Inc., a subsidiary of Square Co. (based in Tokyo) is expanding into the computer-generated film arena. And they're using Allegro CL<sup>®</sup> and AllegroStore to ensure that the film is completed on time and on budget. Their first 100% computer-generated feature length film (*Final Fantasy*) scheduled for release next year, is more photo-realistic than other computer-generated films such as *Toy Story*, *Antz* and *A Bug's Life*.

Phantom, Square USA's proprietary production database system, has been in use for two years and tracks almost all production assets, people, shot names, shot lengths, blending statistics and workflow related to the film. Allegro CL and AllegroStore are used at the "core" of the system, and an intermediary scripting language seamlessly links the various in-house production tools the artists use in their daily work back to the database.

Shiro Kawai, chief architect for the system, says they decided to build their own system because nothing on the market fit their needs. It was Square USA's first movie project and everything was new. He knew that any system used would have to

accommodate major changes and revisions as the film evolved. "We didn't want to adapt a production database and find out one year later that it wouldn't work," emphasizes Kawai.

Square USA decided to build the system in Lisp (Allegro CL) due to the need for flexibility and scalability. They chose AllegroStore because an Object Oriented Database was needed to



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more precisely measure and manage the many complex factors within the constantly evolving database. "We could have used a relational database," says Kawai, "but the workflow would have been very different. By using AllegroStore, we were able to accommodate any production requests that came through. We couldn't have done that with a relational database."

Allegro CL made it easy to prototype and build the initial version of the system, which was completed in two months. The rest of the system took about two years to complete - with just two programmers. Kawai built the core system, and another developer came in later and built the GUIs. "If I had used C++ and another Object Oriented Database, I would have needed at least one more programmer" adds Kawai.

Square USA Inc. plans to continue using Phantom on future productions, and it was designed in such a way that it can be easily adapted to different productions. Future system enhancements include embedding data files into object classes, to make it easier to track workflow and production processes more precisely.

Square USA uses Allegro CL Version 5.0.1 and AllegroStore 1.3 on a Sun Ultra Enterprise Edition (5.5.1)

*For more information about Phantom or Square USA's film, Final Fantasy, please contact Shiro Kawai at: shiro@squareusa.com or visit www.finalfantasy.com.*

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