



TUTORIALS

TECHNIQUES / TIPS / TRADE SECRETS

BLENDER

steps to SUCCESS

Turn a simple walk cycle into a stroll with style! Improve your character animation in our Blender masterclass, which makes use of genuine rigs from the movie *Elephants Dream*, provided on the CD **BY BASSAM KURDALI**

Walk cycles are one of the staples of 3D character animation. Yet it's all too easy to end up with bland, robotic movements. In this tutorial, you will learn how to create a walk with personality, keyframing and refining a basic movement cycle, then layering secondary animations over the top.

For this, we will use *Blender's* NLA Editor (Nonlinear Animation Editor). It works just like a video editor, but using animation 'strips' instead of video clips. Each strip represents instances of an action that can be moved, scaled in time or layered on top of other strips. This allows you to create an action that contains one walking cycle, while the strip itself contains as many cycles as are required for your character to walk along the path you have assigned to it. The repetitive nature of the cycling can be offset by using additive action strips to alter the motion, or by adding other strips to layer different actions on top of the walk.

In the tutorial, we'll be using Proog, the lead character in the world's first open source animated film, *Elephants Dream*. First, we'll keyframe a basic walk cycle and make the action loop properly, then put him on a path and add some actions and

layer animations on top of his walk. Finally, we'll look at some of the extra cloth animation controls the character rig contains. Don't worry too much about Proog's coat until the very last step of the tutorial - to look good, it needs some hand tweaking.

The walkthrough is intended for readers who already have some familiarity with both *Blender* and the basic concepts of animating a walk cycle. If you get stuck, refer to the annotated screenshots on the CD. The disc also contains a set of numbered scene files that will enable you to pick up the tutorial again at the corresponding steps, and more are available for download from www.3dworldmag.com/stoppress.

The Proog model itself is the genuine rigged character from the movie, and is available under a Creative Commons attribution licence, so it can be used for any project you like.

Most of the tutorial can be completed in *Blender 2.41*, which is included on the disc. However, some of the advanced steps require *Blender 2.42*, which should be a free public download from www.blender.org by the time you read this.

Bassam Kurdali is a freelance animator. He recently finished work as Director/Animation Director on Elephants Dream www.freefactory.org



FACTFILE

FOR
Blender

DIFFICULTY
Intermediate / Advanced

TIME TAKEN
One day

- ON THE CD**
- Full-size screenshots
 - Blend file for Proog
 - Textures
 - Blend files for stages 2, 15, 21 and 26

ALSO REQUIRED
More supporting files can be found on our website

ON THE WEB
• Bonus scene files and finished walk animation
www.3dworldmag.com

ON THE CD
• *Blender 2.41* (see note in introduction about version 2.42)
SEE PAGE 82