

### LAKME, the making of.

I directed a lot of Computer Animation Films, since '85 for Commercials or Corporate Image... But we decided to produce this first personal project with my company to bring the most wonderful Opera Aïrs to a large audience using modern mixed techniques of today.

"Lakme" is part of a 52 minutes TV Special called OPERA PIX, for which we invited 10 other Directors to give their personal vision of 12 famous Arias, a gala in an 'Opera Imaginaire'.

The beautiful duo of two young Indian girls immediately suggested to me a duo of two hands, as in Indian dances...

I had the pictures quite clear in my mind, and started to think about the casting of those two perfect hands... (that could also mime and change texture)... And my idea of their shape with very long fingers was close to the drawings and sculptures of Erté. The story had to be filmed using computer graphics, and I had to wait for the technique to be ready to animate properly that quite sophisticated 'object' that couldn't be like a wood model with articulations as used for drawing lessons.

The time to raise the money for the whole programme was just right, (2 years), and the brand new software was just ready to be tested on the film "Lakmé". A new experience for me was to select the right hands to programme the animation that had to be as sensitive as the two female voices, and it was no more a question of technique... I decided to work with two talented young ladies, Estelle and Violaine, dreaming of a production session that could be achieved with a maximum feeling and a minimum of what people normally disapprove with computer graphics: Coldness.

From the first line test, I had the very new impression in this job, that the emotion was there! Not only computer generated, thanks to the two 'actress' programming gestures, lights and textures.

Now that we had the duo of hands, changing aspect to mime the different animals, and suggesting beauties and dangers hidden in the jungle, I had to think about a location that could suggest a warm Indian moonlight with a river and a forgotten temple... In short: How to achieve the mood for such an unexpected duo? Working with digital images, allows the combination from all kinds of sources, and I filmed a lot of tropical plants in a cold Studio in Brussels, during the winter, and a beautiful girl to play the statue which becomes the live princess, and a young actor to be the British officer who falls in love with the magic appearance.

All the elements were filmed separatly in front of a blue screen, and I had to explain to the lighting cameraman all the things that were missing in the studio for the moment: The hands, the temple, the river etc...

I came back to Paris, and the company ExMachina, where the hands were animated, to combine thousands of layers from different sources, color balance, and simulate the depth of field as if the scene had been filmed in one shot.

I was happy at the end because, everybody seeing the film asks me where they can find the music... And that was exactly the first objective of this project: Giving the opportunity to a wider audience to discover some of the great magical Opera arias.

Pascal Roulin, Paris 26th March 1993.