



Bvirtual and iCreate
present

A Virtual Dylan

Wednesday November 9th. 2005 at 5.30pm.
The Dylan Thomas Centre, Somerset Place, Swansea

Dylan Thomas was born in Swansea in 1914 and lived here until he was twenty. Swansea inspired much of Thomas' great work, and now, over fifty years since his death, Dylan Thomas himself is the inspiration behind a ground-breaking project in Swansea.

"Through the medium of 3D digital computer animation we have brought back to life Dylan in a strikingly vivid way that has never been seen before. No moving pictures are known to survive", explains Bernard Mitchell, producer of Virtual Dylan.

The virtual head has been recreated by the team of animators at iCreate in Swansea, using photographs, a 3D scan of his death mask, and voice recordings made in New York in 1952.

The animators started work on the project in May 2005. "We took on this project because we knew it would be a challenge", explains Jake Major, creative director at iCreate. "Animating a human face is an ambitious task, because, as humans, we know exactly how a face should look and how it should move... any mistakes in the detail are instantly obvious".

The concept of 'A Virtual Dylan' was developed by photographer Bernard Mitchell after a life-time interest in the poet, during recent post-graduate research at Swansea School of Art. The production company Bvirtual Ltd was formed to market and licence 'A Virtual Dylan' and develop exciting future projects.

"Today we are at the beginning of a new era of 3D computer imaging and animation. It is our ambition to build in Swansea a centre of international excellence, in the high growth virtual reality industry," says Bernard Mitchell.

"Given that no moving footage of Dylan Thomas exists, we hope that this televisual image of him will help to broaden his appeal among the younger generation, some of whom are more interested in television and film than in the written word", says Dawn Lyle, managing director of iCreate and co-producer of Virtual Dylan.

"This is Madame Tussauds for the 21st century, a way of breathing new life into historical and literary figures. We are excited about the numerous potential uses for this technology, and hope this project will spark the imagination of others across the UK."

The Production Team:

Bvirtual

Bernard Mitchell - Producer

iCreate (www.icreate3d.com)

Jake Major - Director

Dawn Lyle - Co Producer

Liam Tandy - Lead Animator

Virtual Dylan Production Process

Digitally scanning the Death Mask.

The bronze cast of Dylan's Death Mask, made by sculptor David Slivka, was digitally scanned at PDR, UWIC (National Centre for Product Design and Research, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff) to produce a digital 3D model.



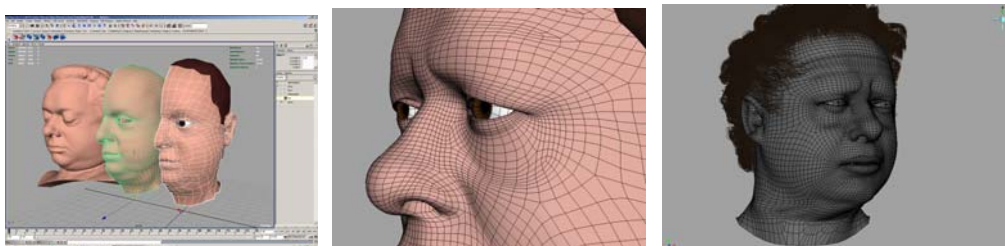
Collating photographs of Dylan.

Hundreds of photographs of Dylan were gathered together to use as reference material.



3D Modelling of an animatable head.

iCreate built an animatable 3D model of Dylan's head using the death mask scan and photographs as reference.



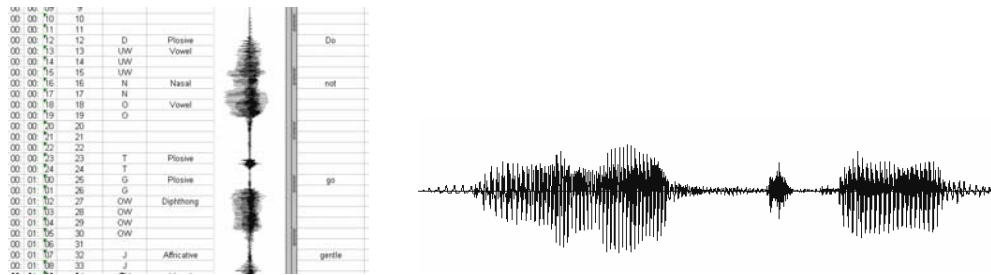
Digitally painting the skin texture and creating hair.

Skin texture maps were digitally painted and hair was made by the 3D artists at iCreate.



Analyzing the sound track of "Do Not Go Gentle..."

Dylan's 1952 Caedmon recording of Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night was analyzed phonetically by-ear to produce an accurate guide for lip-synch animation.



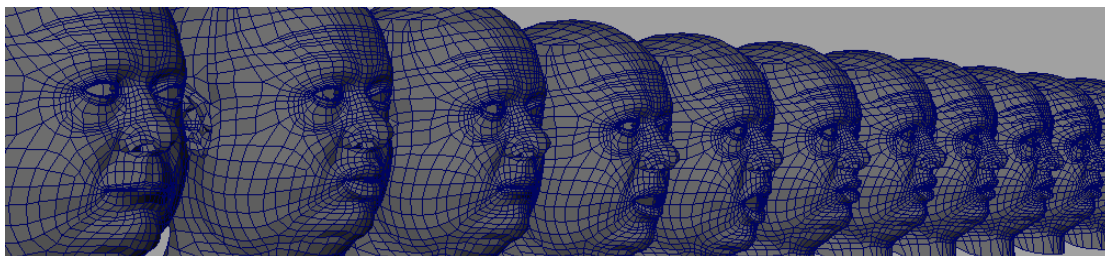
Filming with actor Bob Kingdom.

Actor Bob Kingdom was invited to the Dylan Thomas Centre in May to perform his rendition of "Do Not Go Gentle..." His performance was filmed and used as reference for the animation process.



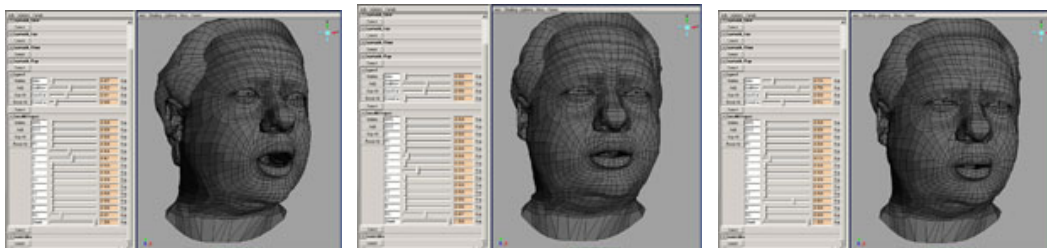
Modelling multiple 'morph target' heads to set up animation controls.

iCreate modelled multiple heads with different mouth shapes and expressions to set up controls for animating the Virtual Dylan.



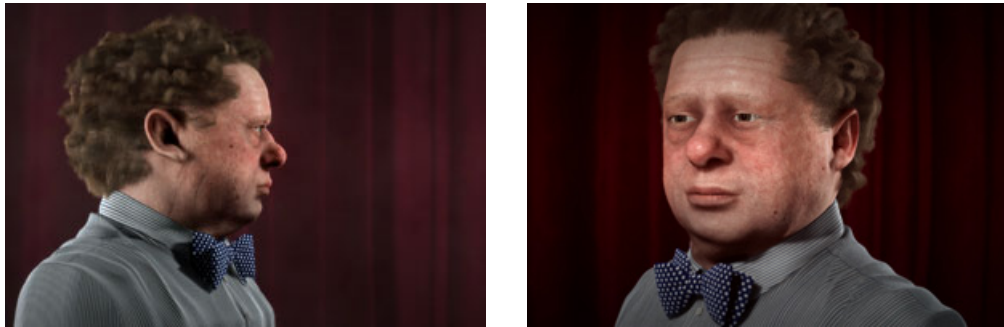
Lip-synch and facial expression animation.

Virtual Dylan was animated to the recording of "Do Not Go Gentle..." using the sound track analysis and Bob Kingdom footage as reference.



Lighting and rendering to create the finished film.

With the animation complete, realistic stage lighting was added to the scene and a photo-realistic render was produced to arrive at the finished film, which is 90 seconds in length.



Production of 'Making Of' Documentary with Provision Video Productions

We have produced a 15 minute documentary about the production process, for screening at the premiere. This film includes interviews with members of the team and gives an insight into the numerous stages involved in the production.

Project Launch on the anniversary of Dylan Thomas' death on 9th November 2005.

The premiere of A Virtual Dylan takes place on 9th November at the Dylan Thomas Centre in Swansea. We would be interested to hear feedback from those attending the premiere... send us your comments via the website, www.virtualdylanthomas.com

For more information about the making of 'A Virtual Dylan' contact Dawn Lyle at iCreate, on 01792 485 701

Or visit www.virtualdylanthomas.com