



Cobalt™ Helps Create Mayhem

Did Sonny pull off a murder? Did he program himself to operate on the dark side? Is it insane to go after a robot for criminal malfunction?

In the movie, *I, Robot*, Will Smith plays a detective investigating a murder in which the main suspect is Sonny, the robot. Although murder is bad stuff, Sonny was good news for Ashlar-Vellum™. In the hands of Dave Kindlon and Dan Platt, Ashlar's designer software, Cobalt, took Sonny from a dream to a physical model with jointed mechanical framework, complex external parts and amazing internal sections.

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I, Robot designer Patrick Tatopoulos first conceived the design for Sonny, then took it to product engineer Dave Kindlon and digital sculptor Dan Platt (*Stargate, Independence Day, Godzilla*) to translate the 2D concept into a 3D object. Kindlon and Platt handled Sonny's digital industrial design. "I was asked," said Kindlon, "if I could have done my work in any other software package. To some extent, aspects of this project could have been handled by other packages such as Alias Studio and Autodesk Inventor. But Cobalt was able to handle both the mechanical and ID aspects of this project in one integrated package."

With the help of Cobalt the studio CGI team, Digital Domain, then translated Sonny the physical model into Sonny the animated star. The team was so impressed with the finely designed model, they asked for his various parts to scan into their drawings. Kindlon suggested a more efficient route: just take the IGES data directly out of Cobalt! The original data then served as the basis for the animation work.

Sonny was a fascinating piece of work and another link-up between Ashlar and leading edge movie design. Kindlon began using Vellum 2.5 in 1992. He has worked on *Star Trek: Nemesis, Godzilla, and Stuart Little*. Kindlon says he "can't think of another product that has such a nice combo of industrial and mechanical design."



Dave Kindlon and Dan Platt used Cobalt's powerful set of tools to design and create all of Sonny's complex parts. The animators were able to take all the data directly from Cobalt to create the life-like character for the movie.



Designer Dave Kindlon, left, introduces Sonny to Robert Bou, president of Ashlar-Vellum.



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