



KICKSTAND

animation research + design

For Immediate Release
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Kickstand Announces *StretchMesh* Character Deformation Technology
Paradigm Shifting Tool Allows Artists to Create More Realistic Character Deformations for Animation Production In Conjunction with Autodesk Maya.

NEW YORK, NY – August 27, 2008 – Kickstand LLC, the animation research and development studio, today released *StretchMesh*, a significant breakthrough in character deformation technology for animation production. Kickstand's Core Deformation Technology *StretchMesh* calculates the local coordinates of polygonal vertices to achieve stretchy deformations that look and behave like skin without the need for complicated muscle systems or simulation.

"*StretchMesh* enables a whole new level of interactivity and realism in character technology," said Daniel Dawson, Kickstand Partner and *StretchMesh* creator. Dawson added, "From complicated regions like the human shoulder to expressive regions like a character's face, *StretchMesh* provides a natural stretchy response that is quick to implement and easily art-directed." Oleg Alexander, Lead Technical Artist at Image Metrics, Santa Monica says, "*StretchMesh* is a blend shape artist's dream come true. Its unique ability to use attractors and collision objects in real time makes the blend shape modeling process extremely intuitive and enjoyable. It properly maintains edge spacing which reduces texture stretching. It can also be used as a skin relaxation deformer at render time. If you deal with blend shapes or "skin" on a regular basis--you need *StretchMesh*." As an Autodesk Maya plug-in, *StretchMesh* is currently being integrated into multiple feature film and commercial pipelines and Kickstand is investigating its use as a real-time deformer for next-generation gaming platforms. On the horizon is *FaceLift*, a collection of tools and templates that take the power of *StretchMesh* and apply it specifically to character faces.

About *StretchMesh*

StretchMesh is a new paradigm for surface deformation and represents Kickstand's Core Deformation Technology. By using a fast algorithm for relational vertex knowledge, smooth character deformations can be created quickly and with superior results over existing techniques. *StretchMesh* is implemented as a standard Maya deformer to work seamlessly with and enhance existing workflows. By replicating the elasticity of skin and providing a simple interface for setup and control, *StretchMesh* allows for the creation of compelling

face and body deformations through the use of vertex attractors, collision objects, and fast deformation algorithms. Unlike conventional deformation techniques such as skinning or muscle systems, *StretchMesh* achieves superior results by giving surface vertices information about their neighbors and how much they are moving through a deformation. It is easily integrated into existing pipelines and serves to enhance the results of known solutions.

Inquiries

For more information please contact Rob O'Neill at Kickstand at +01 888-KCK-STND (888-525-7863) or via email at info@kickstandlabs.com. For additional information on Kickstand or *StretchMesh*, please visit www.kickstandlabs.com.

About Kickstand

Kickstand LLC is an animation research and development studio committed to the creation of innovative technology for animation and game production. Founded by partners with extensive experience in feature animation, video games, television, and commercial production Kickstand's mission is to bring sophisticated tools and technology to artists. In addition to commercial software development, Kickstand also consults with studios to provide solutions to complex problems, to create technical assets, or custom tool development. With customers such as Curious Pictures, The Third Floor, and Thornberg & Forester, Kickstand has rapidly become the secret weapon for many leading games and visual effects artists creating high-end animation. For further information please visit Kickstand's website www.kickstandlabs.com.

StretchMesh and *FaceLift* are trademarks of Kickstand LLC.

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