

Switching from fire opal to palladium silver while on the move

The Stuttgart-based CGI specialist, Mackevision, has developed a next-generation car configurator. What makes this tool so special is the fact that Web users can change the wheels, colors or design line of their dream car in real time, while the car "drives" through a video. To achieve this, Mackevision's technical wizards have broken new ground and developed highly specialized solutions.

Mackevision, the German specialist for computer-generated video and imagery, has developed a product-imaging tool for Mercedes-Benz's website, in which the virtual cars appear incredibly realistic and components and colors can be configured while the video is running and the cars are "moving". Over a period of several months of intensive development work, the Mackevision team has produced a full-video car configurator that blows away anything the competition has to offer.

Armin Pohl, Managing Director at Mackevision, explains what's behind this car configurator: "The idea was to enable site users to change the color, wheels and design line of their dream car in almost real time as it drives through different settings and sceneries. To this end, we have combined real film shots taken in Barcelona and the surrounding region with computer-generated imagery of Mercedes-Benz's C-Class. The user interface for entering commands and the video player both run in Adobe® Flash Player® in the users' browser."

The most difficult problem to be solved was at the server end, where the content of the video has to be changed and made available in real time in line with the users' whims. Pohl highlights where the difficulty lies: "All this was exceedingly time-consuming but we at Mackevision have masses of experience in handling CGI and videos, which is why, just two seconds after being selected by the user, the color of the car in the film switches from, say, fire opal to palladium silver without any interruption in the video or the car's motion. The playback technology required to achieve this has been developed by us in-house and a patent application filed."

"The fact that Mercedes-Benz appointed us general contractor with sole responsibility for the entire project was a clear mark of this industrial giant's confidence in us, and I'm more than certain that we haven't let them down," says Pohl. "This new full-video car configurator gave us an opportunity to expand our know-how in a key area, and the result speaks for itself."

Mackevision Medien Design GmbH

Mackevision Medien Design GmbH, headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany, is a creative and systems partner for visual communication. Experts in 3D visualization, animation, post production and visual effects, we create and produce high-quality image and film material. We develop independent, image-generation solutions for international advertising agencies, film production companies and clients in the automotive, architecture and consumer goods industries as well as from the world of science. From data preparation and visualization through creative design to project implementation, Mackevision offers all computer-aided imaging and video generation processes.

From Mackevision's Development department comes an industry-leading set of 3D visualization tools – the F_BOX product family. With the aid of F_BOX solutions, industrial

clients, photographers and agencies can produce photo-realistic 3D visualizations for marketing and information materials simply and cost-effectively, based on appropriately edited product data.

Founded in 1994, the company now employs a workforce of more than 130 highly qualified and extraordinarily motivated people at its offices in Stuttgart, Munich (Germany) and Detroit, Michigan (USA).