Behind the Scenes With Rob Bredow

Meet a filmmaker who's responsible for some of Hollywood's biggest cartoon hits.

By Carli Entin

Rob Bredow has worked on many movies—including *The Smurfs*.

Animated movies are a lot of fun to watch—and a lot of work to make. Hundreds of professionals are involved in every movie!

Rob Bredow is one of those pros. He is a visual effects supervisor who has worked on many animated films, including *The Smurfs*, *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs*, and *The Polar Express*. In this interview, he talks about the skills he uses to bring cartoons to life.

What do you do as a visual effects supervisor?

I am responsible for the picture part of a movie. I work with the directors to figure out what they want the movie to look like. Then I sit down with the artists and tell them what to draw.

Many of the movies you have worked on are 3-D movies. How has 3-D changed the way you work on a film?

In an animated movie, artists work on single pictures called frames. Each frame looks a little bit different than the one before. When the frames are played back very quickly, it looks like the pictures are moving. Normally, movies are shown at a rate of 24 frames per second. For 3-D movies, we need to make different frames for the left eye and the right eye. That's what makes it look like the picture is coming off the screen and into the theater. So, you're really looking at 48 frames per second.

What's the best part of your job?
It's great to combine math and science with art. For example, we use math to calculate how the light should look against a character's skin.

What's the worst part of your job?
Sometimes we spend up to eight hours a day in a dark gray room looking at pictures over and over to make sure we get it right.

What skills do you need to work in the visual effects department?
Most of the movie is made on computers. So an understanding of computer science is important. Artistic ability is key, too. An understanding of physics is also helpful. (Physics is an area of science that deals with heat, light, motion, sound, and electricity.) We use physics to make special effects—like a crumbling building—look real. Visual effects supervisors also need to be very patient and work well with others.

Rob Bredow takes time to discuss his work.

How can kids get started now?
Learn basic computer-programming skills and sketch your own cartoons, games, and more. Take art classes and draw as much as possible.

Where can you work?
Movie sets, TV shows, and video game companies employ visual effects supervisors.

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