

SOFTWARE REVIEW

Phoenix FD 3.0 for Maya



AUTHOR PROFILE

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FEATURES

Fast and more realistic liquid solver

Quick presets: New toolbar with presets

Optimised volume rendering

Improved Fire and Smoke solver

Force controls: Art direct and control simulations

INDIE BENEFITS

WHO IS PHOENIX FD FOR?

While simulations are a specialised area, many artists find that they will need to dabble in a variety of liquid, fire, smoke and such like. Freelancers are a prime example, as are smaller studios. These users in particular will find Phoenix FD a useful addition to their pipeline.



Rapidly simulate fire and smoke effects without leaving Maya with Phoenix FD 3.0 for Maya

Chaos Group's user-friendly particle simulation plug-in, Phoenix FD has the tag line 'Fluid Dynamics for Artists.' As I've struggled with many simulation plug-ins throughout my career, this sounds like music to my ears, and I wanted to know if it really works.

I was recently involved with a project that was Bifrost heavy, and it was my role to create various ocean-based simulations. I like Bifrost – it's a very powerful tool. But to be honest, sometimes it can feel like a chore to use, especially if you are new to it and don't understand the way it handles units or scale.

As Bifrost is a direct competitor of Phoenix FD for Maya, I thought the ultimate test would be to pit them both against each other. At the end of the day, Bifrost comes with Maya, so if that does the job,

then why bother paying extra for a similar plug-in?

FROSTY TEST

For my test, I set up a simple scene – a spherical emitter pouring water into a glass vessel – and gave myself a 30-minute limit to see how much I could do in that time.

First, having had some experience with it, I applied a Bifrost simulation. I immediately had an issue with the scene scale and the vessel leaking, but after about half an hour of tinkering I managed to get a workable simulation. It certainly wasn't perfect, but I had managed to hit my time limit.

It was now time to see what Phoenix FD could do. Within five minutes I had a simulation that, to me, looked far superior. This half an hour also included the time it took to familiarise myself with the tools. This was

just a quick test, but my initial impression of Phoenix FD was very promising.

Of course, liquids are just one of the many simulations on offer with Phoenix FD. You can create realistic fire, smoke, explosions, splashes and spray to name but a few.

All these effects can also be achieved quickly through the quick preset shelf. Select a source model, click the explosion button, for example, play the simulation and you have an explosion. It's as simple as that. You also get a low-resolution GPU-based preview right in the viewport.

I like Phoenix FD 3.0. It is smart, intuitive and takes the strain out of creating complex simulations; so if time is money, then you should consider purchasing this software.

VERDICT

