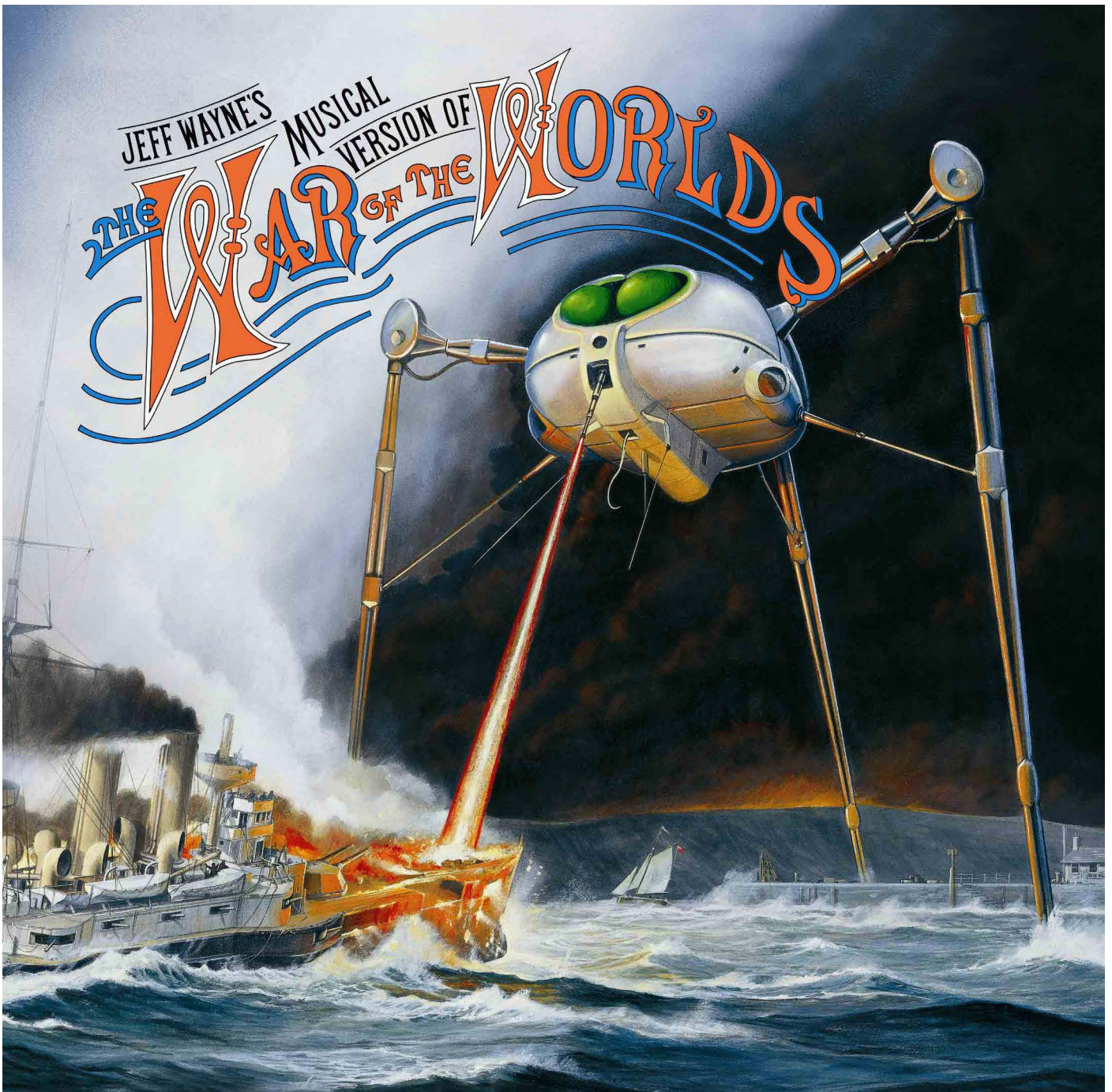


THE WAR OF THE WORLDS VR

initial concept and treatment
by daffy dot london
may 2016



DAFFY



Even though Virtual Reality is 30 years old, it's only now, 2016, this year, becoming commercially available.

It's here and it's happening. Variety Online says we're on the verge of an explosion in this field, and that consumers with VR capability will rise from 200,000 now to 170 million by 2018.

I was hooked on VR from the moment Framestore put a VR headset on my head. Like most creatives I've met since, I immediately began re-evaluating all of my pitches, ideas and in my head I was converting everything to this exciting new paradigm shift. Within minutes of putting a VR headset on 2 years ago my immediate thought was 'Oh man, VR needs Jeff Wayne's War of the Worlds!'

My pitch to Jeff and company is to combine the brand new art form of VR, new binaural electronic sounds, and new methods of theatrical story telling with the visionary album by Jeff Wayne, the score, the sound effects, the artwork, and the nostalgia that people feel when they hear Richard Burton saying
NO ONE WOULD HAVE BELIEVED...



It feels like I've found my niche as a VR director. The skills required for directing in this new realm are tricky, a viewer needs guiding through a 3D space with great care. If they look the wrong way they potentially lose half the action. I went into the Avengers project with some pretty radical concepts, which challenged the tight rules I was given up front. People are quick to add their stamp on the do's and don't's in VR. I decided to decide for myself.

The result was *The Battle for Avengers Tower*, a project now critically acclaimed. A year on, and it is still one of the most respected VR experiences, having recently won 'BEST ANIMATED VR FILM' at VR FEST in Vegas, nominated for a Webby for Best Experience Marketing and we're waiting to hear about its nomination for AICP's 'Next VR' award.

It's still being used by Samsung in stores worldwide to demo virtual reality as a concept. Important people in the business relay to me that they use Avengers as their 'go to' experience to introduce VR to fresh eyes. It's very flattering.

It seems that the Samsung Gear VR is still the best way to get an experience to the most amount of people. It's VR store is just like iTunes, simple to use and easily monetised.

My recommendation for TWOTWVR is to make eight episodic films, taking people all the way in 3D space from Mars, all the way to the final destruction of the Martians in a devastated London. I would extend the story a little bit from the artwork, hinting at a populated Mars planning their mission of demise. Each episode would make the viewer wanting more.

VR works best in short bursts. In this infancy, it should be sharable, so that people aren't in the headset for too long whilst amongst friends.

I think the War of the World stints should be 2-4 minutes each. The whole thing lasting 20 minutes. This is quite a bit of chopping from the original album. Therefore some edits would need to be made.

I've thought at length about how to make this a modern VR project, which feels like the original, is aged correctly in terms of it's 1900's setting, yet doesn't feel dated back to the 70's given that the original album is approaching 40.

The score and the sound effects are timeless. The musical numbers are fabulous but maybe too long for VR, and involve too much character development. I also think that this experience could be pitched as a horror, much like how Orson Welles freaked out a 1938 audience during his radio play.

I loved the ULLAdubULLA remix album. This fresh take on the original breathed new life into the franchise. I'd like to suggest something that bridges the gap between 'remix' and the 1978 original.

A new binaural soundtrack will need building in order for the current version to be compatible with VR. In the way ULLAdubULLA brought new ears to old sounds, I really think a mix by a new electronic artist such as legendary producer James Lavelle would add another layer of sellability to a VR venture.

To keep it authentically Jeff Wayne, and to pull the original lovers of the project, I recommend retaining Richard Burton's voiceover interjected over top '*...like wet leather*'

Ultimately this app needs to create a buzz, and hit as many people as possible. So I'm aiming my pitch to appeal to three completely different markets.

1. My generation and upwards (40+) who know the album very well, and would get giddy at the idea of the VR version.
2. Music lovers who love and respect established electronic music of the last couple of decades. (30+)
3. Younger people (18+) who keep an eye on the best apps out there, and are attracted to the artwork and trailer and who love guns, martians and being scared in the dark.

I recently visited FMX, a conference normally aimed at VFX and GAMES, but this year the subject matter was 'BLENDING REALITIES' and targeted VIRTUAL REALITY.

I got to try on various headsets and watch various films. I was alarmed at how basic, boring, and unfinished most experiences are. Unlike cutting edge film and tv projects, it's actually not a massive challenge to make something popular overnight. It just needs love and a decent budget.

Depending on Jeff Waynes interest and level of investment in a VR App, we should scale the length of a project to a given budget.

BUT...

What I'm writing for is the maximum vision. The no holds barred, the all bells and whistles.

The version in which after people have collected and seen all 8 films take off the headset, are shivering, changed and completely wowed.

It's the version which challenges the reports in various articles about VR being a finite bit of tech, a bit of fluff, something which can't tell story. This will.

It's the version which would gain in momentum as episodes get released and people actually look forward to and discuss the next installment.

Nothing in VR yet does this.

I think TWOTWVR should be scary.

Because VR is so good at hijacking the senses, we should capitalise on the fact that we have the opportunity to present an actual invasion. How would those people in 1900 have felt when martians landed, built machines and began tearing into their land, their homes and their loved ones. Terrifying.

I had a long conversation with Chris Cunningham about adapting the album. He's a video director who has been directly compared to visionaries like Stanley Kubrick and Ridley Scott. He said you could never do the album justice because the sounds are so terrifying and as soon as you place a visual to the sound, you diminish its effect. Just like when Spielberg showed the alien in his feature version of the story, and when M. Night Shyamalan did the same in Signs, people tune out.

But I have a way of combatting the issue.

It's a way to keep the experience frightening.

It allows for maximum production values yet keeping file sizes of a final 20 minute product relatively small on a mobile device.

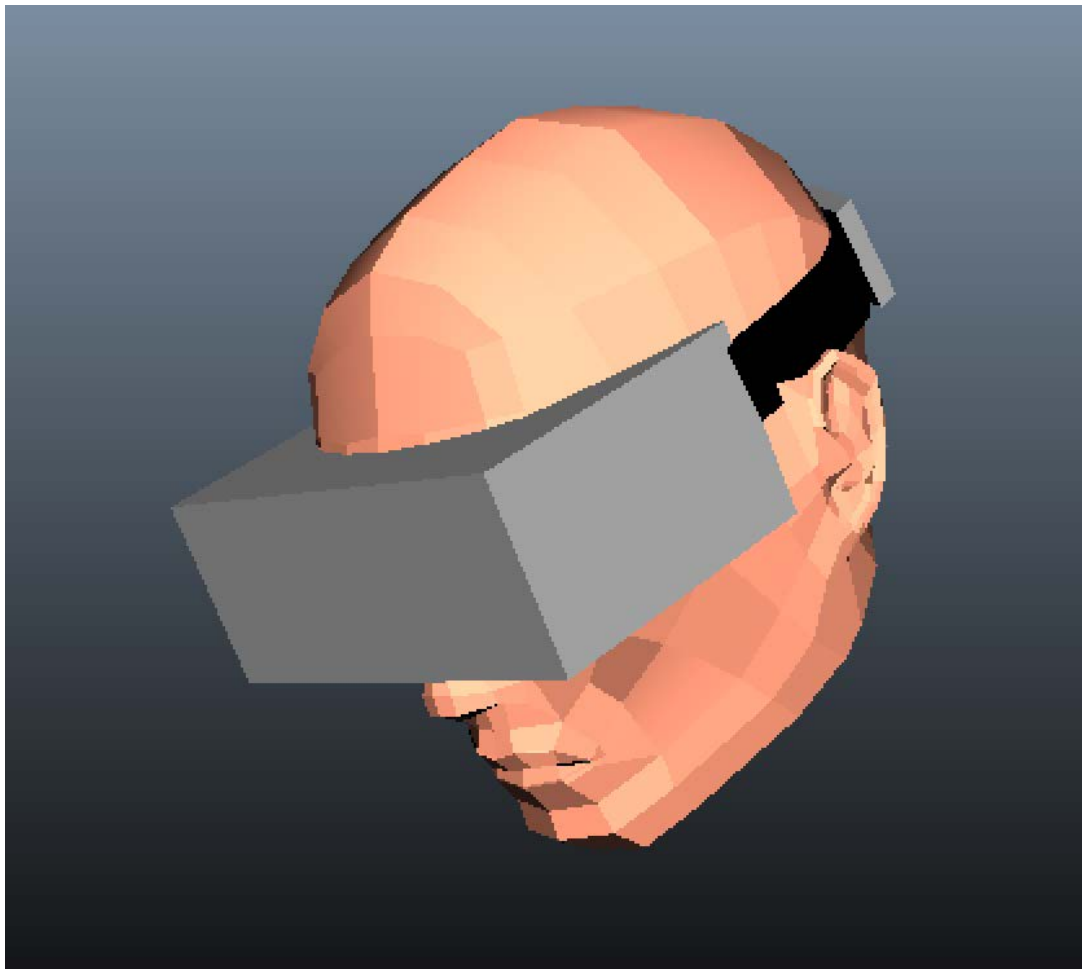
and it gives TWOTWVR a unique style and concept.



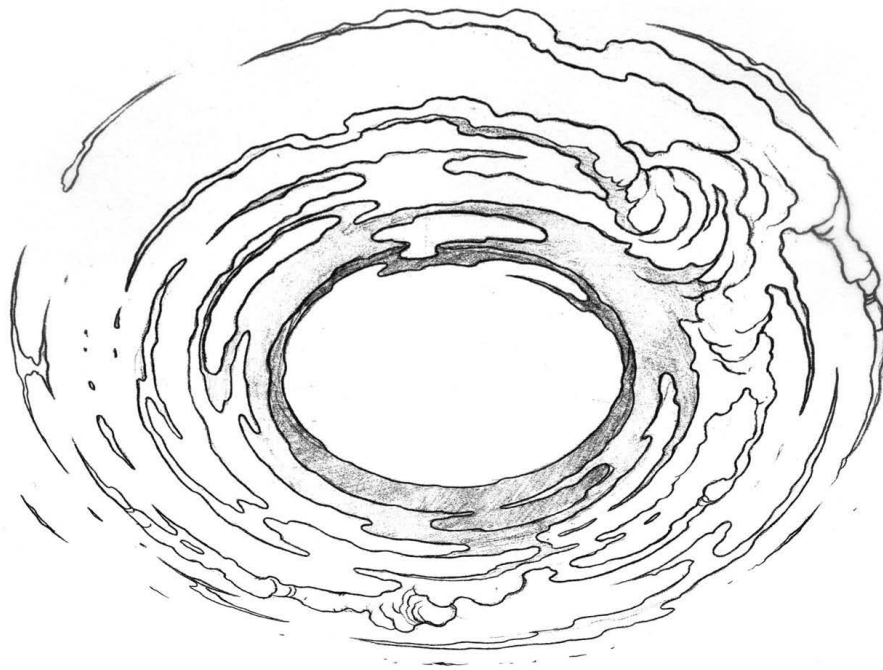
We set the whole adventure in the dark.

The adventure would be 20 minutes long, but showing events lasting over days. The journey of the cylinders hurtling through space might take hours, but for our intro titles it would be edited to minutes. When we're inside the cylinders watching the construction of the tripods this could be days but again, it's presented within 2-3 minutes.

People, sets and props in the experience would be lit by the green eyes of the martians, fire, the moonlight and some choice fake stage lighting to bring up details as needed.



As a story telling devices, it's great to be able to lead the eye around drama in 360 degrees. No-one misses a beat during my Avengers adventure. Done with lots of testing this can be done very effectively with light and darkness. The binaural sound backs up the whole experience.



Explosions and effects should be impactful, glorious, epic huge... and other-worldly stylish. I'd like to bring on board effects animator Michel Gagne. He created the amazing smoke trails, fire and explosions in *The Iron Giant*. He's a legend and has a profound understanding of this type of movement.

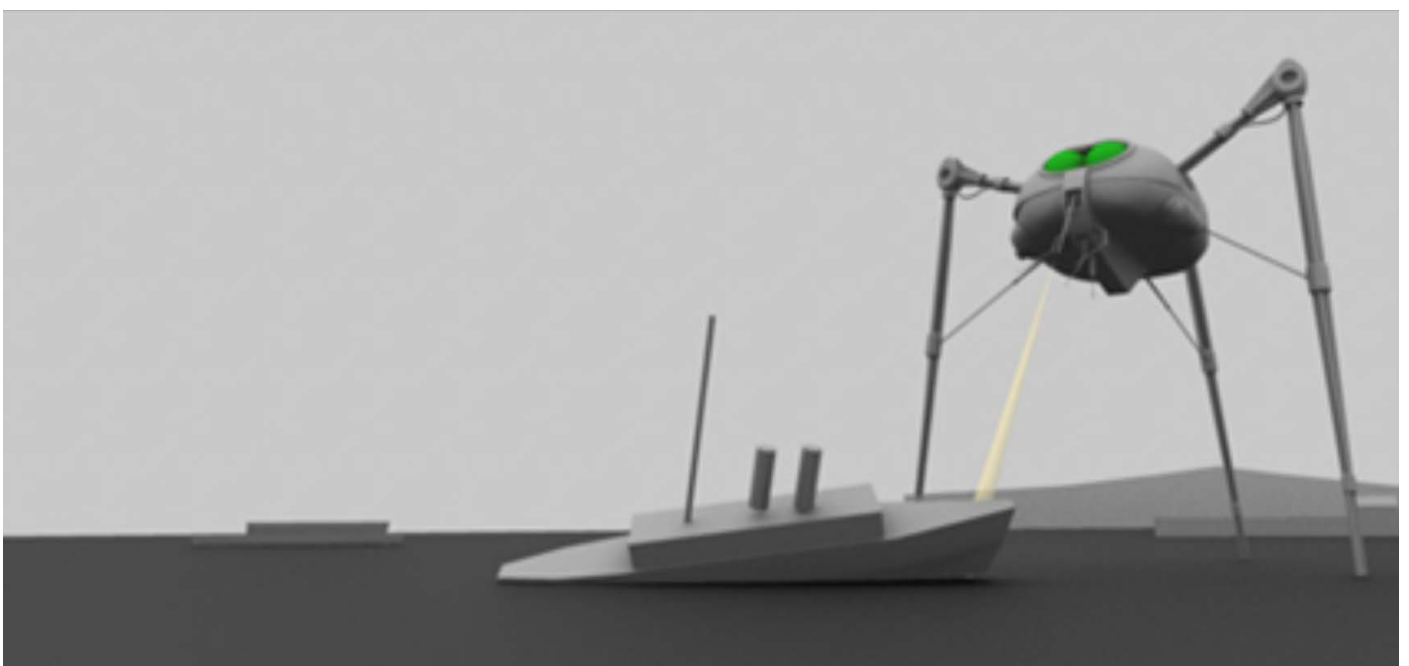
His treatment of the Red Weed in motion would be profound and eerie and exactly as I imagine it would look and move like based on the sounds of Mr Waynes album.



Throughout the experience we should see visuals that look completely authentic to the artwork. As a kid I sat in the back of the car looking at the pictures. They've become permamant fixtures in my psyche and lots of people my age have a similar storyline.



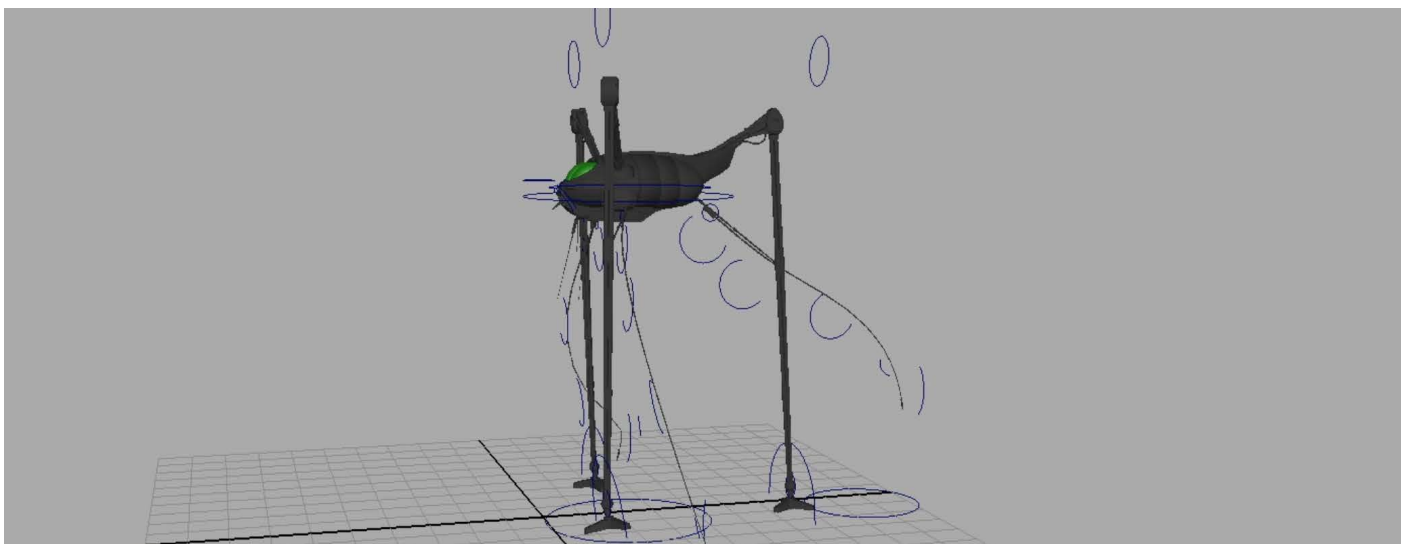
Here you can see the artwork above with a CGI line up drawn over top. Below you can see the basis of a CGI version of the shot. From this, a virtual camera can be placed and action can be extrapolated from it.



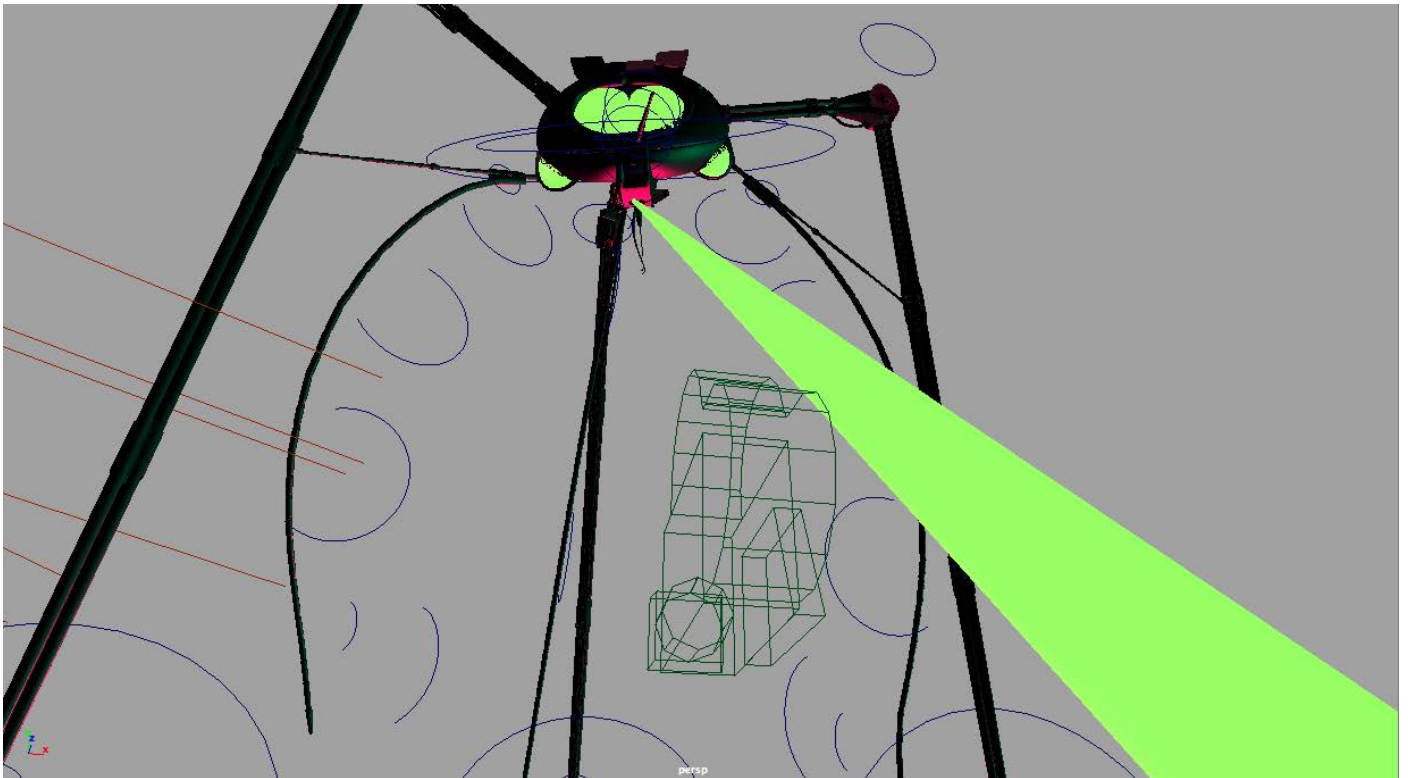
Jeff Waynes - The War of the Worlds has followed me throughout my career. During my time on BBC's Walking with Dinosaurs I debated with my boss about the motion of the tripods. He argued that they could never really lift their feet off the ground. Something that large, slow and heavy.



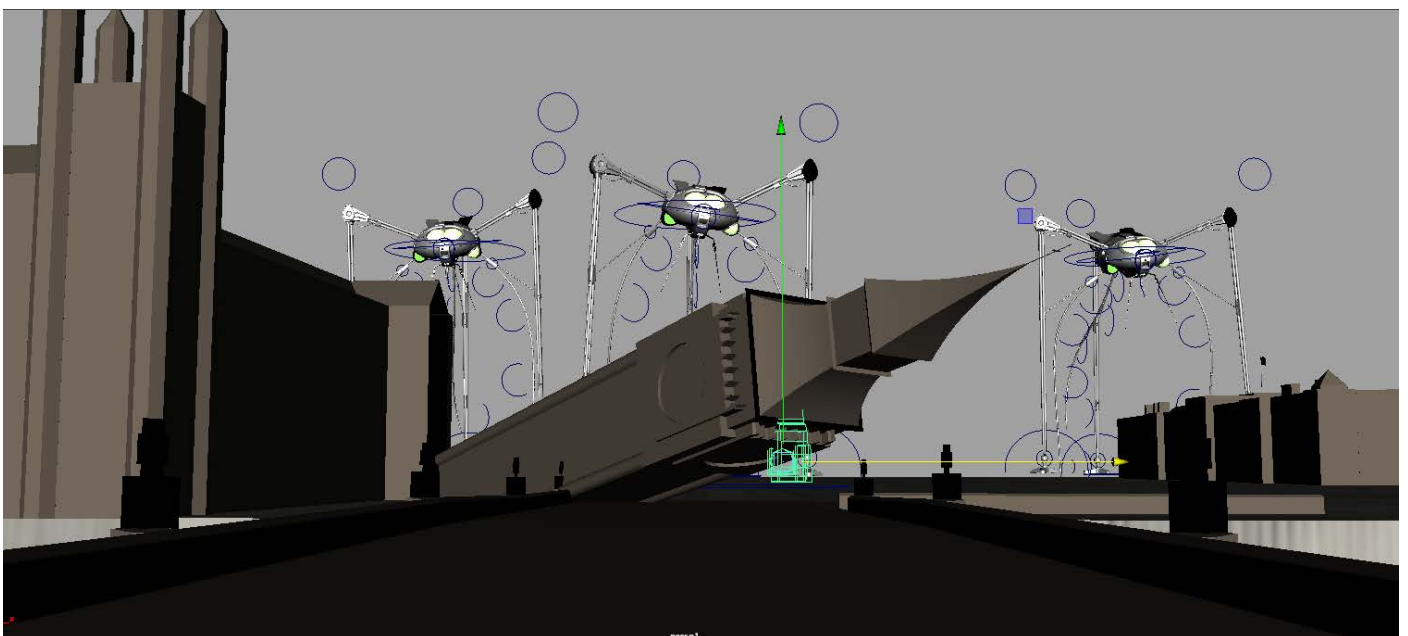
Turns out he was right! And so in my animation test in VR, you'll see that I've added extra supports, which are like bendy telescopic arms which jab into the ground for stability. This allows the design to stay as authentic as possible, but retain believability.



My first VR test is a rough sketch. It shows the power of scale, and the awe of seeing a tripod walk over head. It also shows how well one can lead the eye.



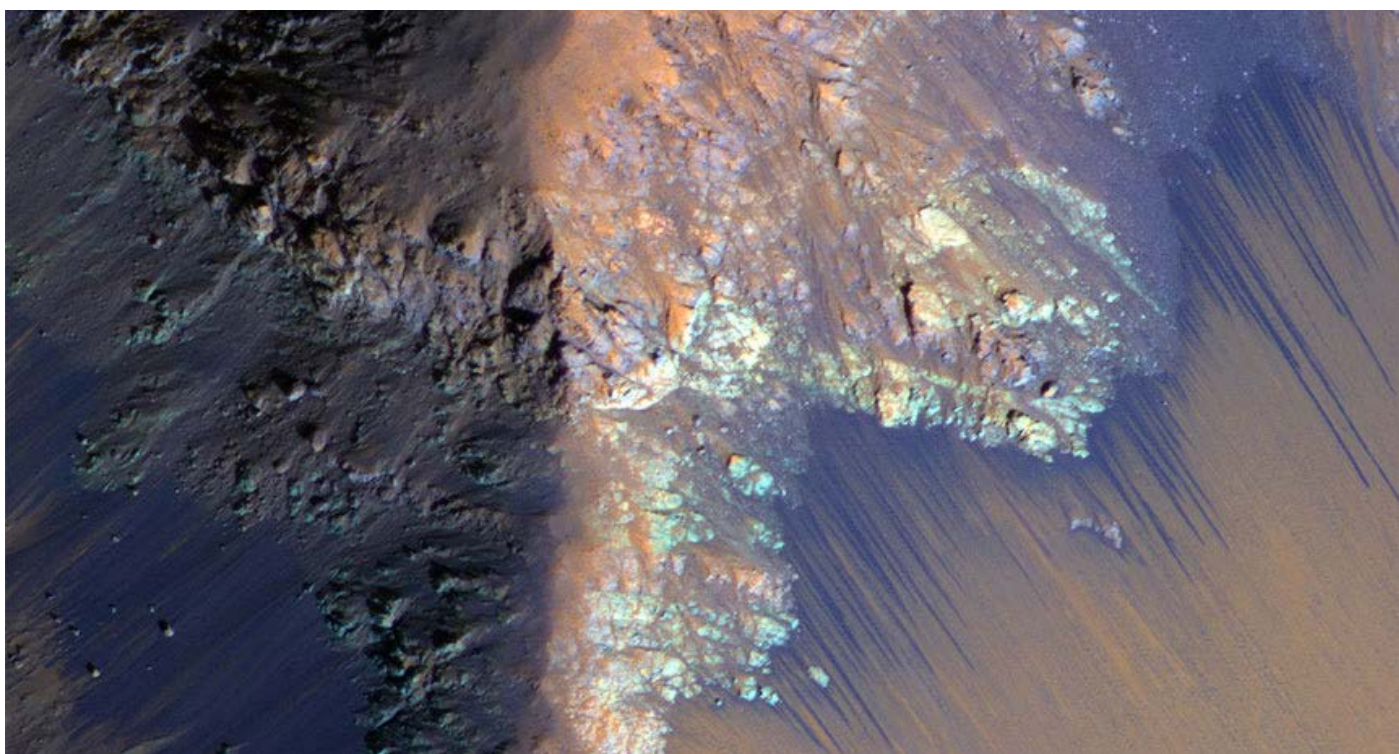
Based on this very simple work, I've started working on a more detailed version, placing the action on the bank of the Thames next to Big Ben. It will feature people run past the VR user in the dark, and a running horse dragging a fallen carriage behind it. The next proper bit of work will be to get this in a more final state. Could be a great trailer.





Episodes.

These are my suggested chapters for the VR experience. So far these are brief descriptions. The next step would be to mix the sounds roughly for each chapter, find the right bits of Richard Burton dialogue, then build a 3d 'PREVIZ' for each episode.



1 Mars.



Antelope Canyon

1 Mars.

As 'no one would have believed' plays, we're travelling through a narrow canyon which looks like Antelope Canyon in the U.S. but the rock would be of the deepest red colouration. Like snail slime, there are smears of complex networks scaling the walls, minute beams of data-like light pulsing through. Within the large, tall cracks that are dotted around, we see shadows glancing past, and we can hear martian sounds. Its clicky, moist and weird.

We look inside the cracks and occasionally spot tentacles, an eye ball, etc. In the distance we can see thin silver and 3 dimensional spider web construction, all holding glass optical lenses in the air. If it weren't for seeing the odd thin line, we might think the lenses were floating.

Up in the sky, set amongst the stars, there's a distinct dot. Like our moon. The lenses increase in numbers. And appear to be in some order. stars grow and diminish in size and detail as we move past the various glass formations looking out to space.

There are now markings on the walls which look like alien plans. There's a central plinth, an observation deck. As we mount it the lenses become aligned. Refractions of the distant dot distort wildly, oceans, forests, atmospheres, and then we stop as rest at the closest lens, covering a significant part of our field of view. The dot is earth. We're being watched.

...they drew their plans against us

2. Space Convoy



ref : Mars Attacks

2 Space Convoy

As Jeff Wayne's legendary chorus explodes in our ears, we jetison into outer space. Approaching Earth, We look behind us and see the red planet disappear. Enormous cylinders launch from beneath hidden cracks. The cylinders scrape past us, one by one. They tumble unapologetically, as if flung by catapults. 100's of identical, vast metal structures with nothing on their shiny surface, except two lines at each end, as if the ends might screw off, and there are vague markings inscribed into the metal, of recognisable Earth land masses. It seems that this onslaught has been planned to the nth degree.

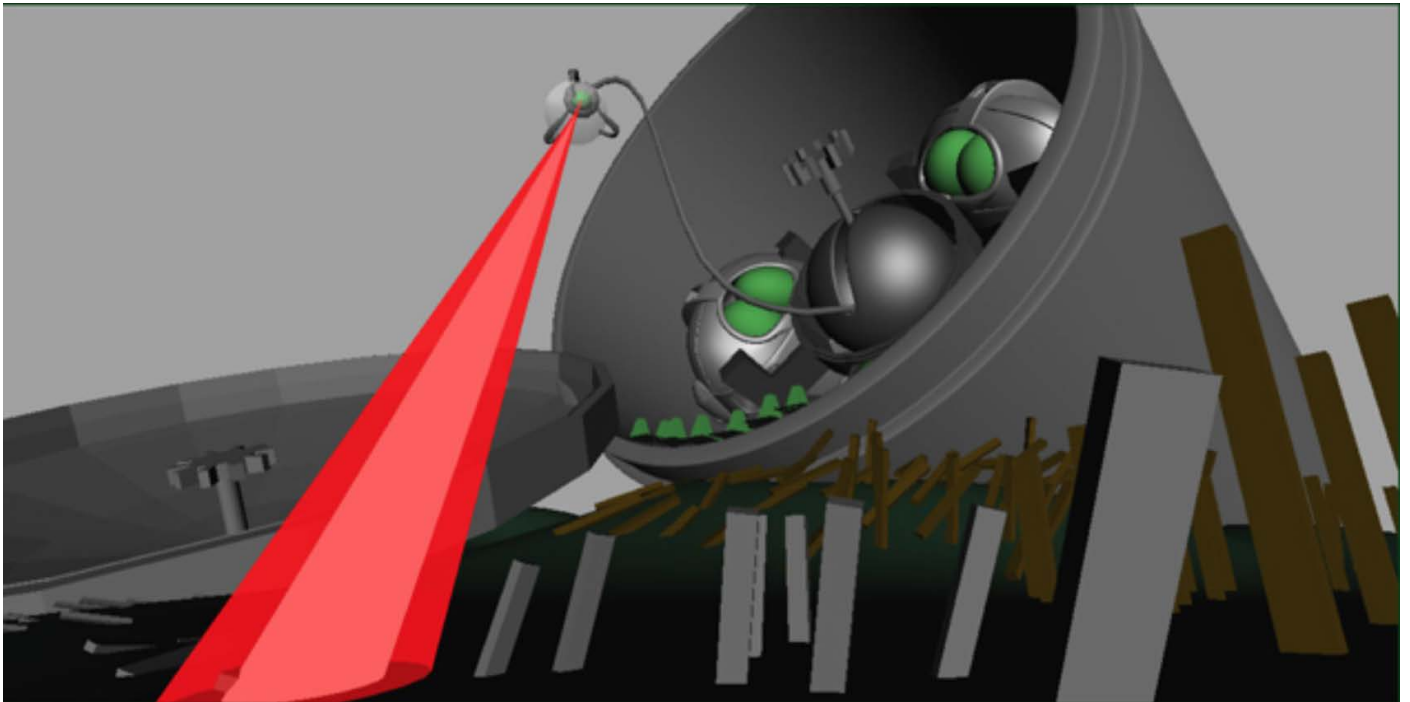
During this flight, we see the titles.

JEFF WAYNE MUSIC PRESENTS...

We eventually pass our moon with Earth getting ever larger. The cylinders in the distance get caught into Earth's Orbit, and one by one plummet to various parts of the planet. The final is the one we follow, heading for Europe, for the British Isles, for Sussex, for Woking, for Horsell Common.

With an almighty crash we cut to black...

3. Inner Cylinder



previz - Daffy

3 Inner Cylinder

I've made some of my own designs for what makes up the interior of a cylinder. Designed to land either end within a solid mass of earth or sand. The cylinders are symmetrical about the middle. This way, either end can screw off.

The tripods contained within are of a steam punk design, and too fragile to transport through space in one piece. Therefore there are six tripods contained in pieces per cylinder, packed inside like 3d version of an airfix model kit.

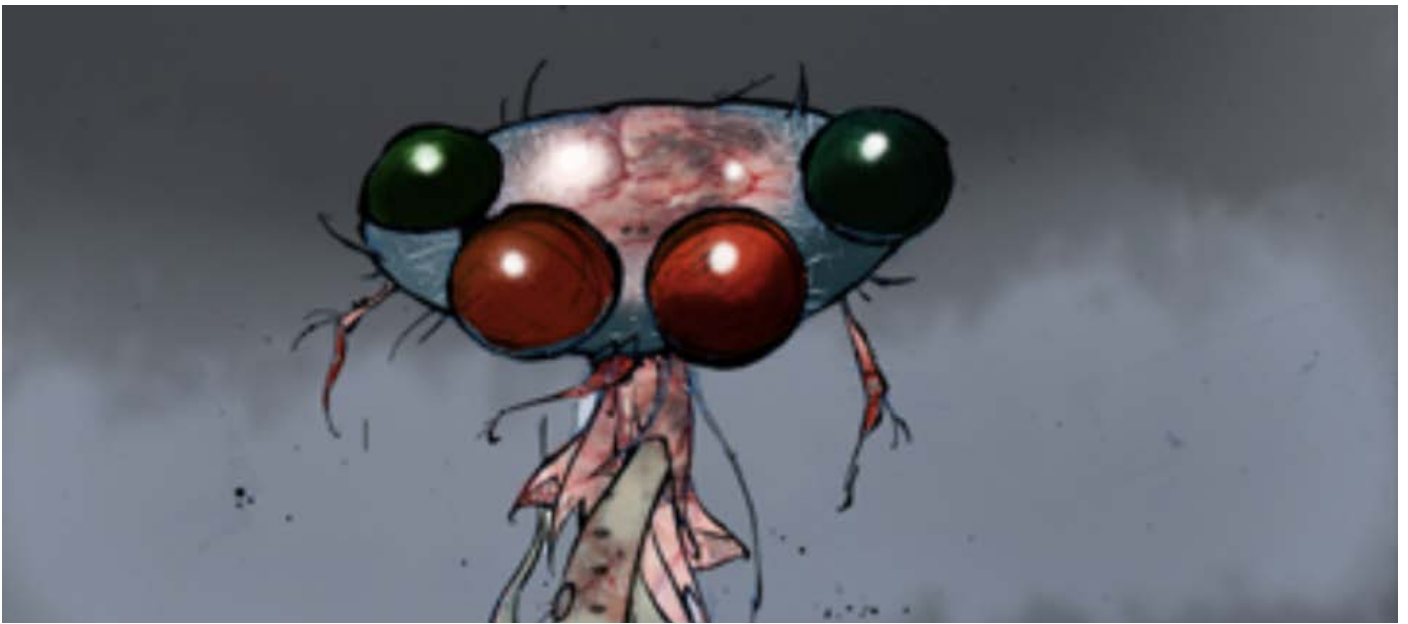
Construction, the unscrewing of the lid, the initial exterminations, are all driven by the shaft which runs down the central core of the cylinder. Each end of the shaft houses a series of tools, weapons, extendable arms, a bit like a swiss army knife.

As we hear hear it unscewing, cast in near darkness, we're given cues that we're inside the cylinder, starting one end we're slowly moving through along the shaft.

Through a series of sparks, green light from viens and alien engineering we glimpse the famous tripods in pieces. Pieces are fusing, and we see all manner of construction.

We occassionally glimpse repulsive black oily wet shapes gliding over the technology. The feeling that we're being watched. As Richard Burton continues to narrate, we see the lid of the cylinder unscrew one last time, it falls and set again the final blue of dusks light, we see grotesque sillhouettes... martians.

4. Martian Dance



Harald Siepermann

4 Martian Dance

As the lid opens, the light sensitive martians flee to the darkness. The alien shapes hinted at earlier on are still ambiguous, but more visible, glisteny, but mainly it's the amount that's what is surprising.

We recoil as we realise that we've been surrounded en masse by these repellent creatures, writhing around our feet and hanging over head.

Burton '...two luminous disc-like eyes appeared above the rim. A huge rounded bulk larger than a bear rose up slowly, glistening like wet leather. Its lipless mouth quivered and slathered, and snake like tentacles writhed as the clumsy body heaved and pulsated'.

The audio for this section is disturbing, as it should be based on this grotesque description. Our martians should never be fully visible, but we should sense their mass and confusing form via their movements all around us. I want their bodies to have no reason. They have no up or down, front or back, hints of octopus, shifting colour like cuttlefish, eye balls disappear and re-emerge at different places on the body.

There are various contemporary dance performances where bodies are abstracted by stretched fabric. The performance of the martians needs a similar treatment. As they look out over Horsell Common, as they busy themselves assembling machinery and preparing for an attack, they inherit what can only be described as a dance.

5 Horsell Common



Thorvaldur Gunnarsson

5 Horsell Common

By the end of the dance our position is now looking down at the people of Horsell Common, who've slowly gathered to witness the commotion.

A man in front waves a flag. The looks on their faces say everything. With smoke streams lining the skies and with the odd fleshy shapes, sparks and green torch lights coming from within the open cylinder, the people watch with wonder and excitement, but peppered with fear and a kind of preordained hopelessness.

They gasp as enormous structures begin to emerge from the vast opening. Like Spiders hatching, but on a colossal scale.

As artillerymen ready their guns, a heat ray has appeared scanning the crowds. The tripods now stand stationary next to the cylinders. The crowd realising that things are not going their way...

"Now and again a light, like the beam of a warships searchlight swept the common, and the heat ray was ready to follow"

We see annihilation on a mass scale, as the ray burns through people like the sun through a vampire.

The tripods step into action and we travel over the perishing crowd, who are now running towards what seems the only escape. The river.

6 River



Thorvaldur Gunnarsson

6 River

We travel underwater which is becoming stained with blood. Some people are swimming frantically, some are clinging to reeds underwater short of breath, some are half dead, trying to grasp hold of us in final states of desperation.

The legs of the tripods are now upon us and the hot rays from the tripods slice through the water tearing yet more people apart, the water boils and bubbles. We narrowly miss these enormous weapons, and the river gets bigger, wider, and the tripods get more and more distant.

We're washed out to sea at Southhampton. We see Tripods lined up on the beach, and the water gets choppier as we're hoisted up and pulled down by the rips. We see in front of us the Thunder Child full of people.

Saved!

The people aboard usher people in the water towards the ship until... A tripod, and another and another emerge from behind the ship. They begin screaming when they realise that they are sitting ducks.

With a horrendous onslaught of weaponry the ship is obliterated. We're washed up on a sand dune, water and limbs and metal remnants all around. From the water and the base of the dune reeds, we notice an unusual growth.

Like a climber plant, but red, slimy, and growing fast.

5 Red Weed



Agust Freyr Kristinson

7 Red Weed

The Red Weed forms from the small bits of movement by the sea shore. It expands and consumes the land at an insane rate.

The camera moves from the beach and over fields, we see it like a spreading bacteria consuming everything in its path.

Via it's 'reach and twist' movement it flattens trees, and crushes cattle, and floors houses. Nothing is left.

Like a slimey river, with the occasional tripod firing on its prey the world looks more and more like an alien landscape.

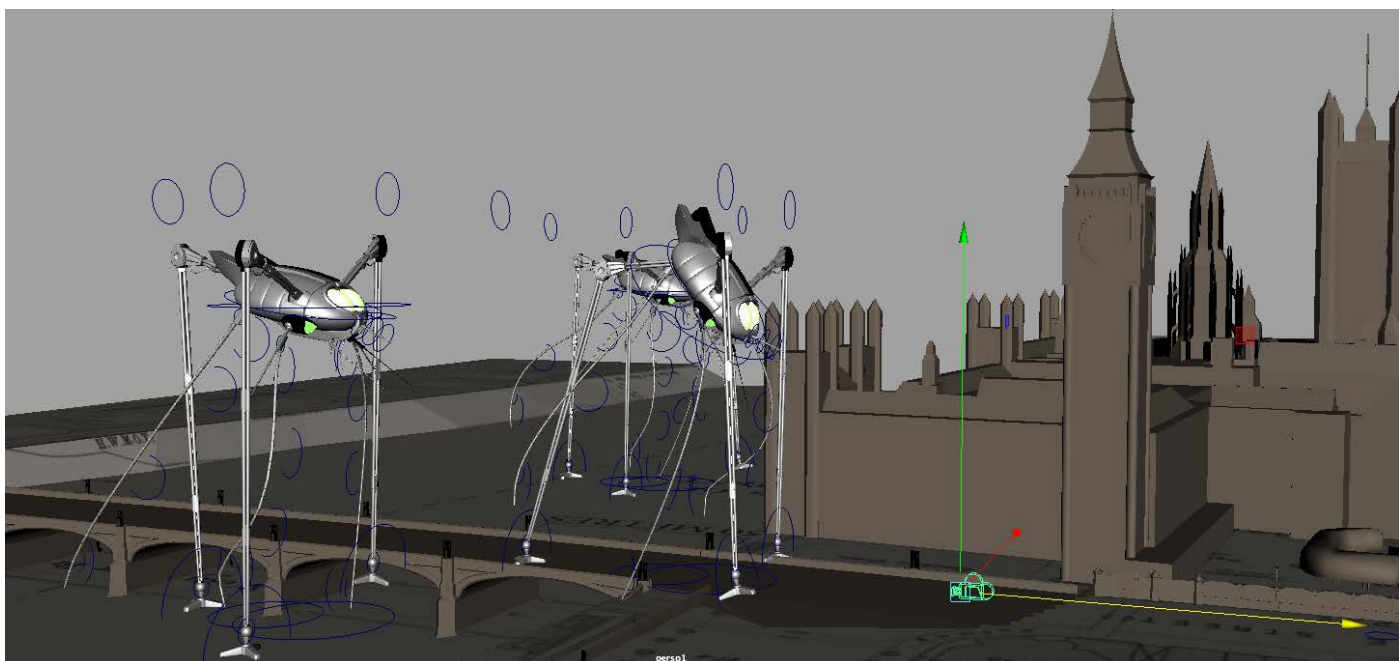
The camera lifts further and we can see 100's of miles in every direction.

From high above the clouds we can see space above us, more cylinders can be seen like shooting stars, green flashes can be seen over the entire british isles, and we're amidst a gaseous mass much like Aurora Borealis.

"As man had succumbed to the martians, our land had succumbed to the red weed."

The weed continues to turn a green landscape red. The camera descends again working it's way to London.

8 London



VR Previz Daffy & Andrew Savage

8 London

London is in tatters. Only a few recognisable monuments on the horizon tell us where we are. Camera slow, we see mountains of dead human bodies, the red weed slower now, perhaps because it has so much to consume, but no, it seems everything is slower. People walk the streets like hopeless zombies. The death they've witness strewn across their faces. buildings continue to crumble around them, and the tripods patrol, but again, they are slow now, clumsy almost. In the distant... a single tripod collapses... and another...

"and scattered about it in their overturned machines were the martians. dead. slained after all mans devices had failed by the humblest things upon the earth... bacteria."

In front of us through the smoke, we look up, a tripod is looking directly at us, it tilts its body, pea green eyes seem to stare at us directly. We're done for. Silence. Then a spark, a jolted movement, a creak, and the tripod trips. It lurches forward and falls towards us. it loses it's balance and falls directly in front of us its body so close you could reach out and touch the metal. It and it's driver inside, dead. The Birds which have been circling like vulture settle on the green of the eyes and tear at the flesh.

We hear inside something opening. Some gross squelchty sounds, like the martians we could hear inside the cylinder, but more pained, then nothing, and finally a hand with suckers spills over the side right above our head, As it swings, fade to black. The End



JEFF WAYNE'S
STEREOSCOPIC
VERSION OF
THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

vr director - andrew daffy
cg/vr test - andrew savage
render service - renderstorm
thanks - laura dohrmann, neha amin, dawn whelan

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www.daffylondon.com