



FEEL THE WONDER

Sully

A look inside the contributions of Technicolor, MPC and Mr. X to *Sully*

■ Customer

Director

Clint Eastwood

Production Company

Malpasco Productions

Warner Bros

■ Challenge

Deliver gripping, photo-real imagery while seamlessly incorporating visual effects, and achieving the filmmakers' ultimate goal of finishing the film for IMAX's new large screen theatrical laser-projection format.

■ Solution

MPC worked extensively on the all important water landing and subsequent rescue sequence, creating visual effects that make the real-life incident captivating without surpassing the bounds of reality. Additional effects were handled by Mr. X. Technicolor tapped into its experiencing handling IMAX-ALEXA 65 footage, and delivered IMAX laser-projection, 2D, 3D, and HDR versions of the film.

Clint Eastwood's *Sully* debuts in stunning IMAX HDR Laser Projection

IMAX Laser-projection HDR Format was the target for the filmmaking team supported by Technicolor's color-finishing and color-science teams and with VFX produced by MPC and Mr. X



The heroic story of Captain Chesley “Sully” Sullenburger made international headlines in mid-January 2009 when he successfully avoided disaster by safely landing his disabled A320 Airbus in the Hudson River — saving the lives of 155 passengers and crew moments after hitting a flock of geese during takeoff from La Guardia Airport in New York. In the hands of director Clint Eastwood, *Sully*’s heroic act is just the starting point of a riveting drama, adapted from the book *Highest Duty*, authored by Sullenburger and writer Jeffrey Zaslow. Technicolor, along with its MPC and MR. X visual effects boutiques, worked with Eastwood, his producing partners Tim Moore, Frank Marshall and Allyn Stewart, and especially cinematographer Tom Stern, ASC, AFC, delivering to Warner Bros a unique HDR color-finished master created specifically for IMAX theatres equipped with their stunning next generation laser-projection systems.

Sully was a first for Eastwood and Stern: photographing with the IMAX-ALEXA 65, targeting their ultimate goal of finishing and delivering the film for IMAX’s new large screen theatrical laser-projection format. Mr. Stern, Eastwood’s longtime cinematographer (after two earlier decades as Eastwood’s gaffer) worked closely with ARRI Rental and IMAX utilizing the IMAX ALEXA 65 with Prime 65 lenses. Eastwood and Stern then turned to Technicolor to finish the film. On *Sully*,

Stern oversaw color-finishing with Technicolor’s new digital colorist Maxine Gervais, whom handled color-grading on Mr. Eastwood’s smash-hit *American Sniper*, shortly before joining the company. Stern has worked closely with Technicolor dating back to Eastwood’s *Blood Work*, in 2002. Other firsts for the project included shooting VFX elements created specifically for IMAX’s aspect ratio of 1:90, in 4k-resolution. Technicolor’s had earlier developed great expertise in handling ARRI ALEXA 65 photography, as witnessed on the Oscar-winning *The Revenant*.

Working with Stern and Mr. Eastwood, Ms. Gervais delivered a “look” of photo-realism with a “very current feel.” Gervais’ color-grades on one of the company’s Baselight systems located at Technicolor Hollywood, and together with Stern targeted P3 color-space, with a luminance of 14 foot-lamberts – the distinctive brilliance of IMAX laser-projection. Gervais noted, “We worked closely with the IMAX team, especially with Lee Wimer, who was a star lab-timer at Technicolor for many years, to ensure that the IMAX laser presentation of *Sully* is nothing short of stunning.” Eastwood, Stern and Gervais reviewed the final grading at IMAX’s Universal City Walk location. Final visual effects color-grading were also reviewed in that venue, along with *Sully* production VFX supervisor Michael Owens.



Regarding specific sequences in the film that required a greater degree of finesse, Gervais cited the crash-landing in the Hudson River in the middle of a New York winter; she also noted a number of key flashback sequences to Mr. Sullenburger's fighter-jet military background. "We paid a lot of attention to 'cold look' of the water landing," noted Gervais, who also oversaw the film's SDR version and downstream deliverables.

Bob Peichel produced the *Sully* finishing work, with Erik Kauffman delivering editorial conform, along with Jeff Pantaleo whom served as Ms. Gervais' color-assist.

MPC's contribution to *Sully* was exhibited throughout the film: from the film's opening sequence – flying an A320 Airbus into New York Times Square - to the passengers and crew being rescued from the Hudson River after the actual forced-water-landing. The scope of this work included recreating Times Square with all its detail in full sunlight, as well as animating the plane landing in the Hudson River itself with numerous water simulations. The scope of MPC's work included realistic fluid-simulations and large-scale environments – completed in stunning 4K- resolution for IMAX.

Throughout the process of pre-visualization and development, MPC was allowed creative freedom in many aspects of the work completed under the

supervision of lead VFX supervisor Michael Owens. The design directive was based in real-life events, which allowed the team to focus their efforts on making visually interesting looking shots, staying true to those actual events while telling the story in a graphically interesting way.

MPC's first task was to create a flock of Canadian Geese, animating those CG assets using ALICE, the company's proprietary crowd-simulation software, creating the sense of the aircraft being unable to avoid them, while maintaining the flexibility to art direct the hero geese as necessary. Their challenge was to make the impact compelling without surpassing the bounds of reality.

The water landing and subsequent rescue sequence was MPC's main body of work for the film. The footage was shot principally on location in the Hudson River where the real-life event took place, with the rest of the action filmed in a local water dam near Los Angeles. After receiving material from locations, MPC completed background replacements and CG water-extensions to simulate the scale of the waves and realism of the overcast Hudson River environment. MPC also created multiple iterations of fluid simulations to achieve not only the correct feel of the surrounding water, but also of the impact splash and mist elements generated as a result of the landing.



The lighting department at MPC pioneered a new way of creating water on this show by using displacement “shaders” with multiple levels of detail. This process involved creating calming maps and secondary elements, which created a seamless finish to some of their most complex shots.

Additional visual effects work was produced by Technicolor’s Mr. X VFX boutique, under the supervisor of Aaron Weintraub.

Technicolor’s Toronto-based sound team created multiple foreign language trailers and IMAX Audio DMR versions for the film’s theatrical release.

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