

# 5 YEARS of 3D HOW-TO!

## Meanderings by **BILL ALLEN** Editor/Publisher, **3D Artist**

When Sanford Kennedy proposed doing a great blue heron cover, we immediately liked the idea for our Fifth Anniversary issue. Great blues would occasionally hunt frogs and toads in the small ponds in front of the house and office in rural seacoast Maine, where we founded **3D Artist** in 1991.

This was begun originally as only a small newsletter—a way to use our many years of publishing experience to jump into 3D. The “working title” was *Virtual Artist*, but it debuted as **3D Artist**. That term didn’t exist, or wasn’t common\*, but “virtual” already seemed so overused as to lack meaning for our audience.

Sally Beach, now Co-Publisher, was then about to attend an alternative healing arts school in Santa Fe, N.M. So we put **3DA#1** into the mail from Blue Hill and

headed out on Halloween. We had a Santa Fe P.O. box, but even the second issue (put together

while staying in a friend’s guest room) lacked a phone number!

In mid-1992, after five issues, we had not really acquired momentum and almost stopped publication. Encouragement came to continue. A minimal scratch-built 486-33 system was purchased at cost, and software started to arrive. From this came our first how-to article, in **3DA#6**, about putting clothes on HumanCAD Mannequin figures in 3D Studio. That brought offers from other users to write tips, and our subscription numbers began to grow. With **3DA#8** in early 1993, which had our first magazine style format, the print run went past 1,000.

In early to mid-1994, we hired our first employee, went to color, added Amiga and Mac coverage, and sailed past a 5,000 print run. We also started to distribute to bookstores and newsstands. Newsstand distribution today is the largest part of **3D Artist**’s circulation (in a readership running 20 to 25+ thousand).

In 1995 we set out to expand into a

larger publishing business. We began the year planning a second CGI magazine and a major online publication. By early 1996, however, we had not only learned something about our limits, but also came to realize that we liked growing a highly focussed magazine at a comfortable pace. We didn’t need to be everything to everybody, and we could publish something special and much needed.

The lesson is really the same that we had learned in 1992: concentrate on desktop 3D how-to’s. And that’s what we’re doing as we enter 1997, still growing nicely by focussing on giving voice to the 3D user community, helping you share with each other not just tips and ideas, but also the fun of what 3D is all about.

\*We have yet to find examples of the term “3D artist” in publications that appeared before October 1991. Once we started publication, my recollection is of encountering a general skepticism that anything done with desktop 3D could be called “art.” And, early on, we had trouble getting people (many of them CAD operators and video technicians moving into 3D graphics) to associate what they were doing with a publication that had “artist” in its name! So it appears that we invented the term. Certainly, we brought it into common usage.

## Who Reads 3D Artist?

This is compiled survey info for **3D Artist** subscribers who were current as of 30 Sept. 1996, including data collected during all of 1994 through the third quarter of 1996. Where useful, we also subally info received during the last six months of the compilation (which neatly coincides with significant developments including 3D Studio Max r1 and LightWave 3D v5).

An astonishing number fill out **3D Artist**’s long survey form with its tiny type: 83.4% of people who subscribe using a subscription form with a survey—55.7% of all subscribers for the period!

### Rate your 3D experience

Very experienced ..... 23.5%  
Moderately experienced ..... 47.0  
Experienced users ..... 70.5%  
Novice ..... 25.0  
Not a user ..... 0.9  
The remaining 3.6% didn’t respond

### 3D platforms you use

PC ..... 82.9%  
Mac and/or PowerMac ..... 21.1  
Windows NT ..... 15.2  
Amiga ..... 12.9  
SGI ..... 9.5  
Other numbers were negligible.

### As a 3D user, are you a...

Freelance professional ..... 35.1%  
Employed professional ..... 23.3  
Professional user total ..... 58.4%  
Enthusiast/home user ..... 19.2  
Other categories ..... 17.1  
(Educator, student, developer, sales, other.)

### Software popularity

	Total	Last 6 mos.
3D Studio DOS	55.7%	52.6%
AutoCAD	30.5	
Animator Pro	30.2	
3D Studio Max	5.1	23.5
Vistapro	22.5	21.6
trueSpace	18.5	19.6
Animation Master	14.7	16.9
LightWave 3D	12.5	15.9
Ray Dream	7.0	14.6
Imagine	13.8	12.8

POV-Ray ..... 13.1  
Bryce ..... 5.7 ..... 12.2  
Strata Studio Pro ..... 6.9 ..... 11.1  
Everything else was under 8%, including Animator Studio, Softimage, and Topas.

### Do you use service bureaus?

Video ..... 15.4%  
Slides ..... 16.5  
Prints ..... 25.0  
Other ..... 4.3  
Answered 1+ categories ..... 36.3%

### Other questions

Purchase 3D models ..... 38.4%  
Do VRML ..... 11.7  
This is a relatively new question.

### Newsstand Readers

We have not yet systematically surveyed newsstand readers, who outnumber subscribers. Anecdotaly, by comparison, this audience appears to be slightly less experienced, and somewhat more likely to be using non-Autodesk products.

### Renewal Survey Info

Renewing subscribers are asked all the above, plus an even longer and more tedious set of questions (thanks!).

Have you made purchases in the last 12 months based at least in part on info from ads and/or articles you saw in **3D Artist** about

3D animation packages ..... 33.6%  
Add-on products (plug-ins, etc.) ..... 37.3  
Hardware (digitizer, video, etc.) ..... 23.4  
Books or other publications ..... 37.9

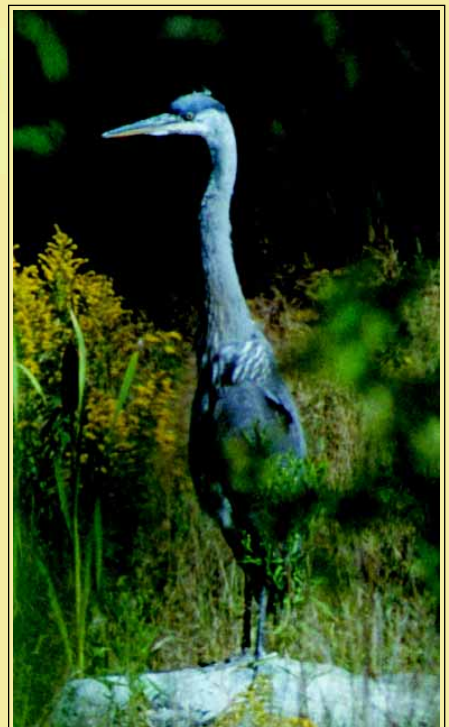
Have you recommended a 3D product purchase in the last 12 months

To your company ..... 37.0%  
To a friend ..... 41.6  
At a user group ..... 9.3  
Online ..... 10.7

Video hardware: Do you own and use

Truevision Targa board ..... 16.9%  
Single-frame recorder ..... 13.8  
DPS PAR board ..... 15.4

How many people read your copy of **3D Artist**?  
1.9 people including the subscriber



In the cover background photo, a great blue heron is hidden by the foreground artwork. The same bird is seen above, standing by the same frog pond, from a different viewpoint using a longer lens.

Hardware tallies. These percentages are of those who answered the questions (not of total)

RAM: 34.2% had 64Mb+ (50% in last 6 mos.)  
Monitor size: 74.4% 17" up (30.1% 20" up)  
Computers used for 3D graphics:  
70.8% use 2+ (21.2% use 4+ machines)  
Network rendering  
41.6% do and 27.0% plan to

### Are these serious users, or what!

**Audit:** The actual survey forms used for these tallies are available for on-the-spot inspection and sample tallying (but not copying) by appropriate 3D advertiser reps. Just give some warning about your arrival so as not to overly disrupt the office.