

## COMPANY

**WAU Animation Sdn Bhd**

## LOCATION

**Cyberjaya, Malaysia**

## SOFTWARE

**AUTODESK® MAYA®  
AUTODESK® MUDBOX®  
ARNOLD  
SHOTGUN**

# WAU ANIMATION: SUPER-AGENT OF QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY

## Uses Autodesk Maya in the production of Ejen Ali animated series

"70-80% of what the audience sees in the animation series Ejen Ali is created using Autodesk."

— **Usamah Zaid**  
Founder & Executive Director  
WAU Animation



Image courtesy of Wau Animation

**WAU Animation**, which specializes in end-to-end CG animation production, has a strong team of 60 people operating out of an office studio in Cyberjaya, Malaysia. WAU's first intellectual property (IP) "Ejen Ali," which revolves around a hi-tech boy spy, has firmly placed the Studio as an inspiring change-maker on the global map of CG Animation.

Autodesk has proved invaluable to WAU's journey. "70-80% of what the audience sees in the animation series Ejen Ali is created using Autodesk," informs Usamah Zaid, the Founder & Executive Director of WAU Animation.

The studio strongly believes in infusing a local essence in its products to present a unique Malaysian identity to the world. As reflected by its English homophone, WAU seeks to tell amazing stories, which not only entertain but also resonate with the audience and inspire them. At the same time, the Studio endeavors to make the output look as international as possible with the help of advanced tools such as those from Autodesk. The focus on high-quality visuals and animation, along with the interesting genre of espionage, has allowed Ejen Ali to stand out from other local productions.

"Ejen Ali has received rave reviews from both audience and critics alike, who acknowledge that the show is the new animation benchmark for CG

Animation in Malaysia," says Usamah.

Usamah and his team have been using Autodesk since their Multimedia University days and have acquired expert-level skills with features such as XGen, used in generating realistic hair and skin. They continue to use Autodesk Maya at WAU Animation. "A lot of learning and knowledge that we've got has been on the Autodesk software, which provides a massive array of tools. It really is the most complete set of solutions found in no other off-the-shelf software," he says.

The first season of Ejen Ali took some time to develop because all the assets had to be created from scratch. The WAU team worked tirelessly on asset building for a little over 2 years and the pilot took almost 6 months to put together.

However, production soon picked up pace as the team became more conversant with the process. Maya's file referencing system helped WAU save precious time by making it easy to implement any changes across the production. Usamah reveals it was the first great thing about Autodesk that he discovered, well before he started WAU Animation. "I was amazed by how assets could be interlinked by file referencing. This is a critical advantage for any massive long-form format like a TV series, where you want all your files to be connected. With Autodesk, you don't have to open every file, every time you need to make changes in something."

## Usamah believes that of all the off-the-shelf software for CG Animation available out there, Autodesk is the most comprehensive

In Ejen Ali's creation process, Autodesk solutions mainly help WAU Animation in asset creation, animation and lighting. For asset creation, WAU employs Mudbox in 3D sculpting and painting. "Studios who produce series for TV don't usually go for this usage," Usamah confides, "but we use it to push the details of the visuals." Arnold is used for look-dev, surfacing and rendering work. And for animation and lighting, the Studio relies on Maya. Talking about the ease of learning an Autodesk tool, Usamah says, "We decided to try mastering Maya and putting it in the pipeline. It really paid off, with us picking up the tool, learning it quickly, and harnessing it into the production process." WAU has used Maya from the start, even as it explored the look and feel for its IP. "When the audience sees the characters, the level of details blows them away! Everyone notices the hair, the textures of the skin and the outfits. All of this, we're able to achieve through Maya. Maya is also responsible for the quality, not to mention the efficiency with which we can manage production," he shares.

Usamah believes that of all the off-the-shelf software for CG Animation available out there, Autodesk is the most comprehensive, "I think, for the time being, Autodesk and Maya provide a complete solution for CG Animation. Also, to switch to anything else would require a huge investment, as we would have to allocate time for the learning curve."

Having progressed local animation to the next level, WAU now intends to carry on producing great animation work to accelerate its growth further and catch up to the international levels of creativity and quality.

According to Usamah, WAU's direction as a company is to enhance its IP portfolio but, at the same time, it hopes to co-create. "After Ejen Ali, we get approached a lot by other creators who wish to collaborate. At the moment, developing our pipeline is going to require some time, but I think, in the future, we'd love to explore partnering for new shows that have good potential in the global market." He also states that the Studio wants to continue providing animation production solutions. "Not only do we want to realize our vision for what a good product should be, we also want to help other studios and other creators realize visions of their own. We believe we have the mind and muscle to help."

As for WAU's plan to improve through technology, Usamah says the Studio is looking to adopt more Autodesk solutions in the future. "I think if we started using Autodesk Shotgun, the pipeline will become more effective and hopefully push the production to the next level."

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