

THE SENATE VISUAL EFFECTS

PRESS RELEASE  
AWARD WINNING UK VFX TEAM WIN 2<sup>nd</sup> EMMY

DATED  
29<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2006

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## Award Winning UK VFX Team Win 2<sup>nd</sup> Emmy

The Senate Visual Effects' award winning team have done it again. Their work on the HBO/BBC production 'Rome' has been honoured with an Emmy for Outstanding Special Visual Effects for a Series. This accompanies the prestigious Visual Effects Society award won by The Senate earlier this year for Outstanding Visual Effects in a Broadcast Series.

This is Emmy number two, in as many years for The Senate, one of the leading lights in London's ever-growing visual effects scene. The company won last year for their visual effects work on 'The Life and Death of Peter Sellers'.

This year's accolade was awarded for episode one of 'Rome', to which The Senate contributed an array of effects, including stunning vista extensions and vast crowds. As the series Visual Effects Supervisor, The Senate's James Madigan not only guided The Senate, but also oversaw key shots from several other UK vendors. "I am delighted that our work has been recognised by such a prestigious body" enthused Madigan. "I had the good fortune to work with a team of very talented artists and I am immensely proud of everyone. I look forward to producing some equally exciting effects for series two."

In total, The Senate delivered over 320 shots across the first series of 'Rome'. Throughout the episodes, the scope of effects ranged from ancient architecture and bloody gladiator battles to garden extensions and subtle wound enhancements.

The team is presently working with HBO again on series two, currently being filmed in Rome's Cinecitta Studios. The Senate are also delivering a number of other high profile UK based features, including 'Stardust' and '1408'.

'Rome' marks the fifth successful collaboration between HBO, the BBC and The Senate, following on from 'Band of Brothers', 'The Gathering Storm', 'My House in Umbria' and 'The Life and Death of Peter Sellers'.

Since its creation in 2000 The Senate has collected an impressive list of television and film credits. In the last 12 months alone, these include 'The Da Vinci Code', 'United 93', 'Closing The Ring', 'Firewall', and of course 'Rome'.

For all inquiries please contact Sarah Hemsley on 00 44 208 607 8870 or visit [www.senatevfx.com](http://www.senatevfx.com) for more information.

# ROME - EPISODE I - 'THE STOLEN EAGLE'



The common stylistic theme running through 'Rome' is the gritty depiction of life in the world's first great city, circa 50 BC. From day one, the creative brief was to deliver seamless, organic visual effects shots that would reinforce the production design and help reproduce a living, breathing city.



Planned for a prestigious Hi-Definition broadcast, a feature film approach was adopted throughout the production. Every take was shot on 35mm, with visual effects scanned and delivered at 2K resolution. CG architecture had to stand next to practical builds, digital doubles mingle with real crowd, and matte paintings transform cramped corners of sets into expansive vistas. A meticulous level of detail was sought to insure the highest quality finish to the 400-plus visual effects shots required for the series.

'Rome - Episode I - The Stolen Eagle' establishes the time, place and feel of the series. This is an unromantic view of history. A messy, cluttered city, full of imperfections. The camera is always moving, as dozens of characters and locations are revealed for the first time. With so much to introduce, visual effects are employed as shortcuts to develop the story: revealing the enormity of Caesar's military force, the sprawling world inside the city walls and the sheer size and brutality of the population who lived there.



## Life Inside Caesar's Camp

Research told of camps occupying many square miles, something impractical to construct for real. So a small number of tents were built for foreground live action, with extensive background vistas and 3D environments created digitally. The scope of these shots meant there was often a restricted blue screen - occasionally there would be no backing at all. A combination of cranes, dollies and handheld camera were mixed together to freely show the camp as naturally as possible.

All Caesar's camp shots were 3D tracked, then laid out in Maya. Outline sketches were drawn up, and used to determine those aspects of camp life necessary to fill the background. Every detail was modeled in 3D - including soldiers. Key elements of soldiers, horses and general camp life were filmed and used to augment the mixture of CG and foreground live action. Finally, CG smoke was simulated to finish off the atmospheric, dirty feel.



### Behind The City Walls

A recreation of the Forum was built at Rome's Cinecitta Studios which visual effects were often called upon to expand both outwards and upwards. Practical set pieces were digitally replaced with views into the surrounding cityscape and distant hills beyond. LIDAR scans recreated the Forum in 3D space, which were used in conjunction with 2,000 year old topographical maps to show every vantage point and view imaginable. To complement the work surrounding the Forum, numerous artistic renderings approximated how areas throughout the city would have appeared. In the process, an archive of concept images was made to refer to in later episodes. Views from the tallest temple to the lowliest slum were designed. Historical accuracy was paramount.



Shooting in Rome gave instant access to a wealth of reference material and real life textures vital in the 3D extensions and matte paintings that resulted from these concept designs. Composites used multiple layers of genuine detail from areas that still stand today. It is as close a recreation of the ancient city as could be achieved.



### To Live & Die In Rome

Rome is not a safe place, and digital effects are key in showing the gorier side of life. Many invisible effects are present, all reinforcing the brutality of the period. Soldiers are ambushed outside the city walls, as CG arrows wipe them out in moments. A Bull is sacrificed in a bloody ritual through motion control, split-screening and digital enhancement. A decapitated blue screen head blends with the live action. A wholly 3D generated spear kills a fleeing thief, and CG blood seeps from practical wounds.



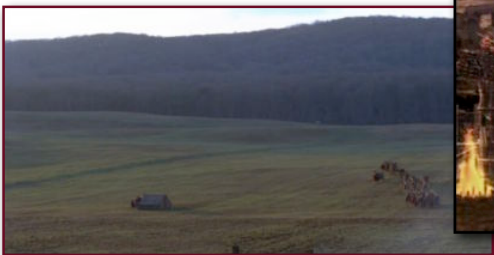
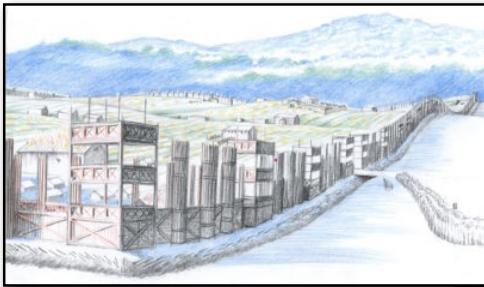
### **Celebrating Pompey's Wedding**

Visual effects were not only used to build beyond the Forum and show a view of the world around. For the key wedding scene towards the episode's climax, the brief was given to create thousands of jubilant Romans and cram the city's centre with life. With only 100 extras present for the actual shoot day, a mixture of techniques was employed to fill the Forum. A number of 3D digital revellers were built, with video motion capture used for animation. Once layered with a handful of blue screen extras and additional DV footage of the artists themselves in costumes, a crowd was born. Key buildings throughout the set were replaced with CG architecture and a full 3D background was generated to show the brighter side of the city in the process.



### **Burning Caesar's Camp**

As Caesar and his legion march from their base in Gaul, the camera reveals their former camp burning to the ground. This is a massive shot, entirely built in CG, with additional fire and smoke elements, matte painting and hand animated CG soldiers in place to portray the trail of destruction left by the Roman army. The minute details of the inferno were achieved by building and collapsing dozens of weakened structures, some measuring 40 ft high (roughly 1:1 scale) and burning them for real.



From the massive city extensions to the smallest paint out, the visual effects in 'Rome – Episode I – The Stolen Eagle' expand and enhance the ancient world and help create an epic production, that takes us back in time, but never removes us from the story.