JASON STELLWAG

Senior Technical Artist | Real-Time & Cinematic
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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Senior Technical Artist with 20+ years of experience spanning real-time development, feature animation, VFX, character technology, and technical art leadership. Combines high-end cinematic production experience with hands-on Unreal Engine development across characters, environments, lighting, materials, animation, and optimization. Experienced leading large technical art teams and building scalable artist-facing tools and pipelines using Python, C++, OpenUSD, Unreal Engine, and Unity.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Technical Art: Characters, Environments, Lighting, Rigging, Deformation, Cloth/Hair/Muscle Simulation, Motion Capture, Performance Capture, Asset Optimization

Programming & Pipelines: Python, C++, OpenUSD, Maya API, Pipeline Architecture, Automation, Asset Validation, Artist-Facing Tools

Tools & Platforms: Maya, Blender, Houdini, Substance Painter, ZBrush, Marvelous Designer, Unreal Engine, Unity, Meta Quest / XR

Unreal Engine: Unreal Engine 5, Blueprints, Materials & Shaders, HLSL, Material Functions, Lumen, Nanite, Control Rig, Sequencer, MetaHuman, Profiling & Optimization

EXPERIENCE

INDEPENDENT GAME DEVELOPMENT

Solo Developer / Technical Artist | *Unreal Engine 5* | *2023 – Present*

- Developing an original cinematic narrative game in Unreal Engine 5, owning technical art across gameplay, environments, characters, lighting, animation, VFX, and optimization.
- Building gameplay and technical-art systems using Blueprints, custom HLSL, Material Functions, procedural masks, and runtime visual effects.
- Creating and optimizing cinematic environments using Lumen, Nanite, dynamic lighting, foliage, volumetrics, and performance profiling.
- Developing end-to-end character workflows spanning modeling, rigging, cloth/hair simulation, MetaHuman, motion capture, Control Rig, and Sequencer.
- Building workflows across Maya, Houdini, Substance, and Unreal while balancing cinematic quality against real-time GPU/CPU performance.

WALT DISNEY ANIMATION STUDIOS

Senior Technical Animation Artist | *April 2026 – Present* | *Contract*

- Spearheading character simulation and shot-development pipeline work for Disney Animation's upcoming feature film *Hex*.
- Developing scalable artist-facing workflows and tools supporting simulation authoring, shot development, and production efficiency.

META

Senior Technical Artist | *February 2023 – March 2026*

- Architected real-time character pipelines supporting parametric body rigs, modular wardrobes, deformation, materials, and data-driven systems.
- Led the rollout of OpenUSD avatar pipelines, modernizing legacy workflows for large-scale content authoring.
- Owned Avatar 2.0 performance optimization, ensuring characters and materials met GPU, CPU, and memory budgets on Quest 2 and Quest 3.
- Served as Tech Art Lead for monthly Fantastic Avatar releases, delivering 100+ character variants and supporting major IP partnerships.
- Developed real-time simulation, C++ pipeline nodes, asset validation, and artist-facing tools in partnership with art and engineering teams.

MICROSOFT

Senior Technical Artist | *March 2022 – February 2023*

- Supported real-time avatar production for Microsoft Teams across Maya and Unity, developing rigging, character ingestion, and artist-facing tools.
- Led cloth and hair simulation workflow development for real-time avatars while collaborating with engineering and art teams on performance and pipeline stability.

WALT DISNEY ANIMATION STUDIOS

Character Tech Anim Supervisor / Senior Character TD (CFX) | *April 2014 – March 2022*

Technical Animation Supervisor — Encanto, Ralph Breaks the Internet
Senior Character TD — Frozen II, Raya and the Last Dragon, Zootopia, Moana, Big Hero 6

- Led technical direction across a team of 49+ artists and TDs, defining character pipeline standards, tooling strategy, deformation workflows, and technical best practices.
- Led department-wide adoption of OpenUSD, extending custom Python and C++ APIs to support complex character assets and multi-shot production workflows.
- Designed artist-facing tools and production systems across character deformation, cloth, hair, simulation, rigging, and shot workflows.
- Developed a post-simulation wind deformation system enabling art-directable effects without re-simulation, becoming a foundational production tool.

SELECT EARLY CAREER EXPERIENCE

SONY PICTURES IMAGEWORKS
Senior Character Tech Anim Artist / Rigging / Simulation | *January 2009 – April 2014*

Selected Projects: The Amazing Spider-Man 1 & 2, Oz the Great and Powerful, Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 1 & 2, Alice in Wonderland, Arthur Christmas, Green Lantern

- Built complex muscle, skin, cloth, rigging, and simulation systems for feature animation and VFX character production.
- Developed creature deformation pipelines for the Lizard in *The Amazing Spider-Man* and the Spider-Man web pipeline for *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*.

UNCHARTED TERRITORY
Environment Modeling Artist | June 2008 – *January 2009*

- Created detailed, production-ready environments for Roland Emmerich's *2012*, supporting large-scale destruction and VFX sequences throughout the 8-month production.

LIGHTSTORM ENTERTAINMENT
Avatar — Layout & Motion Capture Artist | *May 2007 – June 2008*

- Worked within James Cameron's real-time performance-capture and virtual-production workflow on *Avatar*, supporting motion capture processing, virtual camera/layout iteration, and stereoscopic reviews.

ADDITIONAL STUDIO EXPERIENCE | *2001 – 2007*

Digital Domain | ImageMovers Digital | Image Metrics | AsylumFX | TigarHare | DuckSoup | Super78

Roles spanning technical animation, simulation, hair grooming, rigging, character creation, environments, CG generalist work, and VFX across feature film, television, commercials, and interactive projects.

EDUCATION

FULL SAIL UNIVERSITY
Associate's Degree in Computer Science

SELECTED PORTFOLIO

Development Reel — Cinematic & Technical Art
https://www.cgguru.com/#Demo-Reels
Selected work spanning feature animation, VFX, character development, simulation, motion capture, and real-time production.

Unreal Engine — Real-Time Cloth & Hair Simulation
https://www.cgguru.com/unreal-cloth-and-hair-simulation
Real-time character simulation using Unreal Engine Chaos Cloth, including cloth/hair setup, collision workflows, performance considerations, and Maya-to-Unreal simulation pipelines.

Unreal Engine — Real-Time Materials & Shader Development
https://www.cgguru.com/unreal-material-dirt-and-wetness-system
Real-time dirt and wetness framework combining custom HLSL, modular material functions, Blueprints, C++ tooling, runtime vertex masking, and performance-conscious shader design.

Unreal Engine — Environment, Lighting & Cinematics
https://www.cgguru.com/building-environments-in-unreal
End-to-end environment development spanning layout, modeling, texturing/shading, Nanite workflows, Lumen lighting, optimization, and real-time cinematics using Sequencer.