The Ploughman

This illustration is part of a series of three; I wanted to capture the mood of the English landscape focusing on early farming as the theme. I have chosen this particular image because I have worked longer in post than in 3D. The rough sketch in (fig.1) is the starting point for this composition.

Fig 1.

Poser: First are the characters, and for this scene I needed a simple male and horse figure. Because these figures were going to be placed in the middle to far distance of the scene there was little need for detailed textures. The figures used were the preset casual man and horse. The figures were posed (fig.2) and exported as a group obj file into Bryce.

Fig 2.

Bryce: Next the characters were imported and placed into the scene with their original textures. I then adjusted the camera to the approximate positioning of the sketch and using the camera memory dot stored the position. I next needed the ploughed field terrain; this is the main detailed terrain, which will lead the eye into the image. I chose a new terrain and a grid size of 1024x1024 (highest detail). Within the texture editor I created a sloped bank (fig.5) and formed the striped pattern by erasing and eroding to get the textured stripes. Back in the scene the terrain was replicated three times and placed end to end (Z height of each terrain was lowered to a smaller decline), with a slight raised gradient to each terrain, giving the effect of the field rolling away into the distance. I choose a preset mud texture for the field and adjusted the bump and X mapping to improve detail. Next were the grass banks edging the field; one was placed to the left, another to the left (far distance), and one to the right (middle distance). Then a simple grass texture was added.

Fig 3.   **Fig 4.**
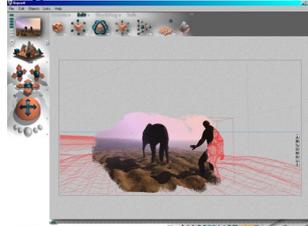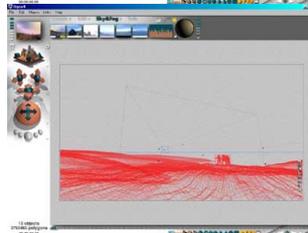
Fig 5.

With all the objects in place, I started work on the lighting. I wanted an early morning misty feel to this image. In the sky lab the clouds were set to soft cumulus, the haze and fog where blended with sun to balance the overall hue (fig. 6ab). After all the final lighting adjustments were made the

Fig 6a.

Fig 6b.

final scene was rendered

Fig 7.

Rendered image in Bryce (fig 7)

Fig 8.

Photoshop:
With the rendered scene in Photoshop I start post work painting from the horizon to the foreground.

Creating a new transparent layer, I began with the clouds. I selected the lightest colour hue from the scene palette of colours. I always try to work within the images colour palette; this helps to keep the tonal balance within the scene as natural as possible. Most objects in a scene will naturally take on surrounding colours from reflected, ambient or direct light. With the airbrush tool and a small (6-8) size soft brush I drew the outlined edge of the clouds relatively roughly at first. I then used the smudge tool with a slightly larger brush, and blended and faded the left hand edges of the clouds. When the cloud shapes were completed, I adjusted the layer transparency a little to knock out any focal edges and flattened the image (fig.8).

Next a new layer was created for the distant trees. The colour for the trees was picked from the horizon where they would be situated and that same hue darkened slightly to start drawing. I used simple brushes to create these trees, brush sizes (soft) 1,3,5. In conjunction with these brushes I have a couple of leaf/foliage types that I use at the bases and for the leaves of the trees. This process was repeated for each stage of the trees adding more and more detail nearing the foreground.   The foreground grasses and shrubs were painted using a similar technique. The 3d render, even with increased bump mapping, doesn't show

Fig 9.

Fig 10.

Fig 11.

enough detail in the grass, and only an extremely fine object mesh multi-replicated would be sufficient but extremely time consuming in rendering. I prefer to lift the grasses up with short fine brush strokes, using high contrasting hues light on dark and vice versa, it is simple but very effective effect, (fig. 9, 10, 11).

Final Image

The final details to complete the composition were the fox and birds following the ploughman. I drew the fox and birds in Photoshop because I did not have 3d models available.

With the composition completed, I then highlighted areas of interest. I wanted the fox to lead the viewer into the image, so this is my primary focal point. With the image flattened I duplicated it and applied a gaussian blur to the copy. This is to give a distance blurring effect. With the eraser brush I brought back the foreground detail by erasing areas of the copied layer. I repeated this process with lighting effects, enhancing certain areas until the balance is right.