# iPi Soft Desktop Motion Capture Plays Starring Role In Director Ian Chisholm's *Clear Skies III*

*Innovative Motion Capture Technology Proves Essential To Production Pipeline of the Latest Film In The Popular Online Sci-Fi Machinima Series*

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MOSCOW, RUSSIA – What began six years ago as simply a "creative outlet" for rising filmmaker/animator **Ian Chisholm**, *Clear Skies III*, the third film in the machinima series about the space adventures of the crew aboard the battleship Clear Skies, has steadily built a huge online audience thanks to its memorable storyline and characters, and creative use of the i**Pi Soft's Desktop Motion Capture system**, which played an integral role in bringing Chisholm's vision to life.
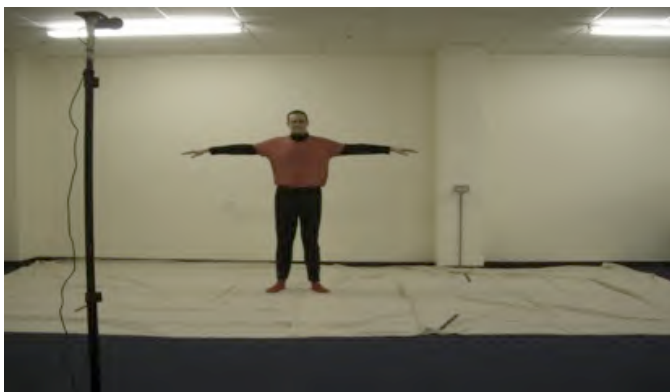
"I started the Clear Skies series about six years ago," Chisholm says. "I'd just started doing some basic video work when I discovered I could use blue screening to composite video footage together. I'd always wanted to tell a full

story, and by using the Eve Online graphics engine for exterior space and ship shots, and the Half Life 2 engine for interior sets and characters, I could finally achieve that. It took over two years to learn everything in the Half Life 2 development kit, and to write my first script, build the sets, shoot, and create the film itself. While the first Clear Skies film, which came out in 2008, looks pretty rough now, then it was a monster achievement for me."

The same cannot be said for the third iteration *Clear Skies III*, which clearly shows how far Chisholm has grown as a storyteller and animator – and how far the motion capture technology from iPi Soft has come as well.



*Clear Skies III* picks up where the second film left off, following the crew of the Minmatar Tempest class battleship named Clear Skies as they try to make a living in New Eden. Led by the obstinate captain John Rourke, Clear Skies III finds the crew stumbling into an epic adventure none expected.

"I continually challenge myself technically and creatively, and *Clear Skies III* is the culmination of what I learned producing the previous two films, from the writing to the acting to the camera work and everything in between," Chisholm says. "Practically every line of dialogue and every movement was motion captured using iPiSoft. Not only was this fun, but it also raised the bar on the performances I could deliver using the Half Life 2 characters. No longer was I

limited to the built-in gestures that come with the game -- I could add more personality and dimension to the characters."
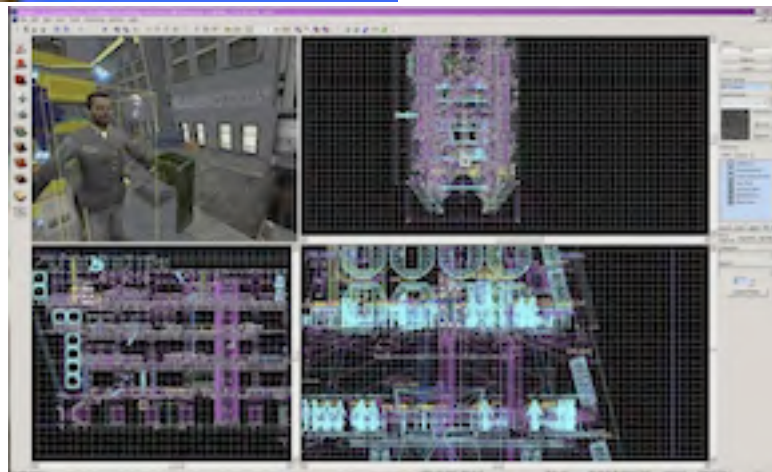
**<u>Better Gestures:</u>**

According to Chisholm most of the built-in gestures in Half Life 2 are static with little movement in the characters apart from the arms. With iPi Soft's Desktop Motion Capture system he was able to not only incorporate the whole body motion, but also walk around in a small area and interact with items that he could position 'on set' – clearly elevating the immersion quotient for viewers.



CG animators working in an array of markets are turning to markerless motion capture systems like iPi Soft because it accurately captures human motion data using inexpensive, off-the-shelf cameras and does not require clumsy sensor suits and green-screen stages.



Moreover, the captured animations don't exhibit artifacts like jitter or foot skate, and can be exported to many leading game engines, 3D software and animation rigs, including MAXON CINEMA 4D, Autodesk Maya, Autodesk 3D Studio Max, DAZ 3D DAZ Studio, Poser, Valve Source Engine, Unreal Engine, Unity and others.

"Using iPi Soft's technology I could create action sequences and dramatic moments -- gunfights, fistfights, character interaction -- that wouldn't have been remotely possible without it," Chisholm explains.

One scene that stands out in particular is the climatic fight between Rourke and Guy "Ghost" Stone aboard the enemy ship, which Chisholm said he designed specifically to take advantage of the latest version of iPi Soft's Desktop Motion Capture system.

Chisholm explains he discovered the iPi Soft motion capture technology through his friend, the digital media journalist and actor Ricky Grove (who also voiced one of the characters in *Clear Skies III*), who meet iPi Soft CEO and Chief Technology Architect **Michael Nikonov** at SIGGRAPH last year just after he'd finished Clear Skies II. "It turned out Michael was already a Clear Skies fan and offered a free license to use the iPiSoft software for *Clear Skies III*," Chisholm says. "It was the impetus I was looking for -- something to push me to making the third film and leap further creatively than I ever have before."

**Fast and Easy:**

Chisholm's technical arsenal includes Sony Vegas Pro 9, Adobe AfterEffects and Photoshop, Paintshop Pro, Cooledit 96, FRAPs, Softimage XSI and the Source SDK. However it's the iPi Soft Desktop Motion Capture system that remains critical to the production pipeline. Chisholm explained that among its many benefits, most crucial turned out to be its mobility and speed.

"I had to travel across Norwich (about 150 miles Northeast of London) to a studio that was large enough to set up the cameras and perform in, and that meant about 40 minutes of travel time, plus setup and takedown time as well," Chisholm explains. "With iPi Soft we could perform the setup and takedown in minutes. If the mocap rig had been complex it would have limited the amount of work we could have done each day. The calibration process was quick, enabling me to preview the results within an hour. The amount of work I had to do was phenomenal, so speed and simplicity were vital."

**<u>Positive Reactions:</u>**
So far Chisolm's hard work has paid off. Reaction to the film has been extremely positive with Massively.com's James Egan calling it "ground-breaking" and a "machinima masterpiece." The film was viewed nearly 200,000 on YouTube, and downloaded just under 300,000. *Clear Skies* parts 1 and 2 were viewed on YouTube a combined 210,000 times. And given the that first two films won numerous awards at the Machinima Expo, Machinima Filmfest and Atopic Festival de films Machinima, *Clear Skies III* seems a shoe-in for more award recognition.

"I knew *Clear Skies III* would be mind-blowing for the viewers of machinima, who are used to seeing a lot of default in-game gestures being repeated over and over again," Chisholm explains. "Getting more organic onscreen acting was crucial to pulling it off and without iPiSoft it would not have been possible. iPi Soft motion capture technology levels the playing field for filmmakers -- the quality of the images, coupled with the cost and ease of use represents a paradigm shift for film and animation workflows."

***About iPi Soft***

*iPi Soft, LLC is a developer of markerless software. Launched in 2009 by CEO and chief technology architect Michael Nikonov, Moscow, Russia-based iPi Soft's iPi Desktop Motion Capture™ is an entry-level markerless motion capture technology that lets animators shoot video that can easily convert to professional 3D quality animation. Delivering breakthrough performance for creative professionals involved in previz, animation and the creation of secondary characters, iPi Desktop Motion Capture can be operated by a single person and powered by one computer. Setup of iPi's markerless system is quick and easy, and extremely portable – perfectly suited for small studios, freelance animators and motion capture enthusiasts. iPi Soft products are available directly from the web site and its worldwide distribution channel.  For additional information, pricing or a 30-day free trial please visit, [http://www.ipisoft.com](http://www.ipisoft.com).*

**Web Resources:**
Click here for more info about iPi Soft:
[http://www.ipisoft.com](http://www.ipisoft.com)

Click here for more info about Clear Skies:
[http://www.clearskiesthemovie.com/](http://www.clearskiesthemovie.com/)

Click here to watch *Clear Skies III* on YouTube:
[http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=4E712D875E5AC822](http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=4E712D875E5AC822)

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