

Reading and speaking

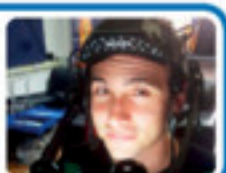
Digital animation

- 1 Have you seen *The Lord of the Rings* films? Look at the photo of the character of Gollum. How do you think this character was created? What other digital characters have you seen in films?
- 2 Read **Part A** about Performance Capture and Tim Doubleday.
 - What is Performance Capture?
 - What's the advantage of using real actors to create digital characters?
 - What's Tim's job title? What does his job involve?
- 3 Read **Part B**, the story of how the video for the *Coldplay* single was made. Work with a partner. Are these statements true (✓) or false (✗)? Correct the false ones.
 - 1 Chris Martin and Andy Serkis decided what kind of video to make on a plane.
 - 2 The markers on the performers' suits have lights on them.
 - 3 Tim puts small dots on the performers' faces.
 - 4 Coldplay liked the idea of being monkeys.
 - 5 The data from the Coldplay session could only be used to make digital monkeys.
 - 6 *Imaginarium* made the forest background and did the lighting for the video.
- 4 These lines might have been said by people working on the video. Which sections of the text (1–5) do they belong to?
 - a 'I think the body of that monkey needs to be a bit thinner.'
 - b 'It's still a bit dark. Let's make it look as if there's sunlight on them here.'
 - c 'We must meet up sometime and make a video together!'
 - d 'Oh, wait a minute! I've forgotten to put a marker dot on your nose!'
 - e 'Hey, let's be monkeys!'
- 5 Read an extract from the text on p158 and choose the correct answer for the words in **bold**. Look in section 2 of the text to check.

What do you think?

- Do you like films and TV programmes with lots of special effects in them? Why/Why not?
- What are your favourite films that use special effects?
- Who's your favourite digital character? Why?
- What do you think makes a good music video? Give some examples.

Watch a video and learn more about how digital animation is used to bring characters to life.



Part A

Performance Capture



Andy Serkis

These days, we hardly think about 'special effects' in films – we're so used to them, they're not actually that special any more! There's the strange, half-human Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings*, the lifelike Incredible Hulk, and the blue-skinned Na'vi people in *Avatar*. These were all digitally created, but we believe in them as real characters, and forget the technical tricks involved. But how do they do it? The answer in most cases is Performance Capture.

What is Performance Capture?

Performance Capture is a way of translating a real actor's performance into a digital character. Actors can perform naturally on a digital stage set, and this performance is then 'captured' by cameras and translated into an expressive digital character. If real actors are not involved, digital characters can often seem lifeless and dull.

Tim Doubleday – Face specialist

Tim has worked in Performance Capture for 12 years, and it's his dream job! He can't believe he earns a living working on the type of games and films he loved playing and watching as a teenager!

Tim works for Europe's leading Performance Capture studio, *Imaginarium*. Based in London, it was founded by the actor Andy Serkis (Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings*), and Jonathan Cavendish. *Imaginarium* has worked on many major films, including *Star Wars Episode 7*. Tim's role is facial supervisor. He's responsible for capturing the subtle movements in the actors' faces, which are used to produce lifelike facial expressions on digital characters.

