**SOFTWARE**

**Modo 901**

**PRICE** £1,199 plus VAT (full licence) £329 (upgrade)  
**COMPANY** The Foundry  
**WEBSITE** www.thefoundry.co.uk

Modo has been steadily increasing its user footprint since the release of 801, now with the release of Modo 901, The Foundry has built on this success with a potential landmark release that adds new features as well as a higher price tag.

The first thing to notice is that the UI has received a welcome polish. Modo has always been a handsome application. Dedicated ‘layout’ buttons take the place of the older tabbed view, which, with better colour keying and icon enhancements for the major tools, means Modo 901 has one of the more inviting UIs of any 3D application.

There are two new additions to the layout selections. Schematic Fusion has become a permanent addition as MeshFusion is now included with Modo 901 rather than being the paid plug-in that it was previously. The inclusion of this excellent SubDiv Boolean modelling solution with the core software sets Modo apart from many 3D apps as it enables the creation of very complex (and watertight) meshes that wouldn’t be as easily accomplished in other 3D software.

Scripting also gets its own dedicated layout, which enables TDs to get better access to the mechanics of Modo and integrate it more easily into their pipelines.

**The Advanced Viewport**

The Advanced Viewport mode brings a new way of exploring your mesh at the build stage. One of the standout features is the new Advanced Viewport mode, which, while still in its early days (it does tax GPU hardware and there are glitches on some hardware configurations), enables the user to see shadows, reflections and transparency in the main viewport while modelling. When coupled with another new addition, OpenSubDiv, this allows for an excellent animation environment. The Advanced Viewport mode brings a new way of exploring your mesh at build rather than at the lighting stage which aids the creative process.

**Final-frame rendering**

Rendering has always been one of Modo’s strengths, and with this version it has been given a huge upgrade with the addition of a physically based shader paradigm, which – along with speed improvements in the core render engine coupled with simpler controls and added features, such as Importance sampling for Light objects, as well as the existing HDR...
Modo artist Steve Barrett leverages the new wireframe shader to dramatic effect with his Soul Catcher render.

**IN PRACTICE:**
MODO IS NOW ONE OF THE CORE 3D APPLICATIONS

Modo 901 is the most significant release so far. The inclusion of the Scripting layout, and the huge raft of enhancements that have been added will bring a smile to any existing user’s face. It also carries the stability improvements from 801 through to the new version on Windows and Mac, which is very welcome. The painting tools and sculpting tools in particular are much improved with greater fidelity, which, when coupled with the Advanced Viewport gives a really good environment for character modelling or adding textures to hard surface meshes. The wireframe shader is a great example of a new addition that just ‘works’ – it can be used to drive transparency, displacement, you name it. The addition of upgrades to core standards such as EXR, Alembic and now OpenSubDiv, which, with the excellent new UDIM support for UV, make Modo 901 perfect to build assets for any other application or game engine.

**VERDICT**

Maps – brings Modo’s renderer bang up to date for workflows from game design to feature film VFX.

Animation and dynamics tools have also been enhanced. Object shattering is now part of the dynamics system meaning you can use background geometries, to drive the shatter pattern, and there is a range of new deformers and a more straightforward rigging system has also been implemented.

At long last there is a wireframe shader which can be used as a driver for many elements throughout the shader tree with gorgeous results.

UV tools have also been hugely upgraded with improved UDIM support, better aligning and relaxing tools, and the ability to pass one set of UVs from one mesh to another with the same topology.

In fact, that’s the story of this release, there are so many enhancements that have been added to the core Modo software that the new additions mask what a great job The Foundry has done with the existing application.

While there are still some issues with Mac and AMD performance, it’s early days and The Foundry is seeking the help of the community to improve the release. If you haven’t looked at Modo yet, you should, it’s a compelling product.

**MODO HISTORY**

Started by ex-NewTek employees Luxology (now The Foundry) launched Modo as a Sub-Division modeller only, but quickly enhanced it with advanced rendering technologies such as the Live Preview window, and it has become well known for its excellent modelling and texturing toolset which has been bolstered by animation and dynamics.