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Visual Effects Society Announces its 2024 Board of Directors Officers

Los Angeles (January 18, 2024) – Today, the Visual Effects Society (VES), the industry’s global professional honorary society, announced its 2024 Board of Directors Officers. The Officers, who comprise the VES Board Executive Committee, were elected at the January 2024 Board meeting. The Officers include Kim Davidson, who was elected Board Chair, and is the first Board member from outside the United States to hold this role since the Society’s inception.

“It is my privilege to serve as Chair of our worldwide community of visual effects artists and innovators,” said VES Chair Kim Davidson. “Since I joined the Society 18 years ago, I have seen the VES grow from a California-based organization to a global society with 15 regional Sections and members in 45 countries. As the first Chair elected from outside the U.S., I am representative of our thriving globalization, and I look forward to further championing our expansion worldwide. The leadership on our Board bring enormous commitment, expertise and enthusiasm to their volunteer service and I’m excited about what we can achieve, together.”

“The Society is fortunate to have exceptional leadership on our Executive Committee,” said Nancy Ward, VES Executive Director. “This group of impassioned and venerated professionals has a strong vision for the Society’s future, especially amidst this time of dynamic change. We appreciate their commitment to serve the VES and I look forward to working with the Committee to evolve the Society.”

The 2024 officers of the VES Board of Directors are:

- Chair: **Kim Davidson**
- 1st Vice Chair: **Susan O’Neal**
- 2nd Vice Chair: **Janet Muswell Hamilton, VES**
- Secretary: **Rita Cahill**
- Treasurer: **Jeffrey A. Okun, VES**

Kim Davidson, Chair

Kim Davidson is the President and CEO of SideFX[®], a company he co-founded in 1987. SideFX is a world-leading innovator of advanced 3D animation and special effects Houdini[®] software.

Davidson has received three Scientific and Technical Awards from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. In 2018, he accepted on behalf of SideFX, the Academy Award of Merit for the creation and development of Houdini. In 2015, Davidson was co-recipient of the Canadian Digital Media Pioneer Award, and in 2019 he and other SideFX team members accepted a Technology and Engineering Emmy award in the Cost-Effective Crowd Simulation Tools category. Davidson was an EY Entrepreneur of the

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Year 2021 Ontario Winner; received the J. Wesley Graham Medal in Computing and Innovation from the University of Waterloo; and is a member of Sheridan College Computer Animation PAC (Program Advisory Committee).

Davidson was the first Chair of the VES Toronto Section and has served on the Toronto Section board for eight years. He has served on the global VES Board of Directors for seven years, on the Membership Committee for seven years, as well as a number of VES ad hoc committees. Davidson has also been a VES mentor and played an active role in the Society's recent strategic planning process on its Impact & Visibility and Globalization sub-committees.

Susan O'Neal, 1st Vice Chair

Susan O'Neal joined the VES in the late 1990s and has served as a member of its global Board of Directors in multiple roles, including service on the Executive Committee in 2016 as Treasurer, and as 2nd Vice Chair in 2022 and 2023. For many years, she served as the Chair for the legacy global Education Committee and currently co-chairs the Membership Committee. She has been instrumental in the work to grow the Society by leading the bi-annual membership review and approval process.

In 2019, O'Neal was honored with the VES Founders Award for meritorious service to the Society.

O'Neal is currently a recruiter for BLT Recruiting, Inc and has worked as an Operations Manager at The Mill, Operations Director at Escape Studios in Los Angeles, and as an Account Manager at SideFX. She started her career in visual effects at Digital Domain in 1993, where she worked in finance and operations before turning to production.

Janet Muswell Hamilton, VES, 2nd Vice Chair

Janet Muswell Hamilton, VES, is the Senior Vice President of Visual Effects for HBO. Janet is a VES Fellow and member of the Visual Effects Society global Board of Directors and Education Committee. With a career spanning several decades, she established her reputation as a VFX Producer and Supervisor for cutting-edge visual effects on a wide range of groundbreaking television series and theatrical features, as well as animation, IMAX, commercials and Stereoscopic Special Venue projects.

Janet moved to the U.S. to pursue the expanding digital world as a compositor, which quickly led to VFX supervising and producing. Her curiosity for new technology has taken her around the globe working on innovative projects. Prior to HBO, Janet was Global Director of VFX Production at Netflix. She has recently become involved in various PGA initiatives and is passionate about educating the next diverse generation of visual effects professionals.

Rita Cahill, Secretary

Rita Cahill is an international business and marketing/PR consultant and has worked with a number of US, Canadian, UK, EU and Chinese companies for visual effects and animation projects. Current and former clients include companies in the feature film, television, VR and game industries, as well as government and educational entities. She is also a partner in MakeBelieve Entertainment, a film development company and serves as Executive Producer on a number of international projects.

Previously, Cahill was the VP Marketing for Cinesite where she oversaw the marketing of four divisions of the pioneering digital studio's services. Prior to Cinesite, Cahill was a founding Board member of the Mill Valley Film Festival/California Film Institute and remains on the Institute's Emeritus Board of Directors. Cahill was also the Founding Consultant on the formation and establishment of the Singapore International Film Festival.

This is Cahill's ninth term as Secretary on the global Board of Directors. She also served as Chair or Co-Chair of the VES Summit for eight years. In 2021, Cahill was honored with the VES Lifetime Member distinction and the VES Founders Award.

Jeffrey A. Okun, VES, Treasurer

Jeffrey A. Okun, VES, has been creating outstanding visual effects for film and television for over 20 years, with another ten years' experience in various industry capacities. Currently working on new FX network series *Alien*, Okun is known for creating "organic" and invisible effects, as well as spectacular "tent-pole" visual effects. Okun has delivered wide-ranging effects in award-winning films including *The Last Samurai*, *Blood Diamond*, *Stargate*, *Sphere*, *Red Planet*, *Deep Blue Sea*, *The Last Starfighter*, *Hitchcock* and *Meet the Ricardos* and acclaimed television programs such as *Cosmos: Possible Worlds*, *The End Is Nye* and *The Good Lord Bird*.

Okun is a VES Fellow and recipient of the VES Founders Award. He co-edited the *VES Handbook of Visual Effects*, an award-winning reference book on visual effects techniques and best practices, as well as the newly released and acclaimed *VES Handbook of Virtual Production*. He also created and founded the VES Awards, now in its 22nd year.

As VES Board Chair for seven years, Okun fostered a global community, focused attention on bringing business and creative education to artists, facilities and studios, and guided the Society to help create a worldwide software anti-pirating alliance with the US Government. He also served as Chair of the Los Angeles Section of the VES for two years and as 1st Vice Chair and Treasure on the global Board of Directors for several years.

About the Visual Effects Society

The Visual Effects Society is a professional global honorary society dedicated to advancing the arts, sciences and applications of visual effects and to upholding the highest standards and procedures for the visual effects profession. It is the entertainment industry's only official organization representing the extended global community of visual effects practitioners, including supervisors, artists, producers, technology developers, educators and studio executives. VES' almost 5,000 members in 45 countries worldwide contribute to all areas of entertainment – film, television, commercials, animation, music videos, games and new media. To learn more about the VES, visit www.vesglobal.org and follow us on X @VFX Society. Read our award-winning signature publication *VFX Voice* at www.vfxvoice.com.