

From the Oscars to the Oval

Digital image sequence processing may not be very glamorous, but it won an Oscar for Trinidadian engineer Dr Anil Kokaram.

Kokaram, 39, received the Scientific and Engineering award from Hollywood's Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences earlier this year for his work on the design and development of Furnace, an integrated suite of software plug-ins used to enhance visual effects in movie sequences.

Furnace has starred in high-profile feature films like *Casino Royale*, *X-Men 3: The Last Stand*, *The Da Vinci Code*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Batman Begins*, *King Kong*, the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *Poseidon* and *Superman Returns*.

Kokaram, a consultant on Furnace's development, shared the honour with Dr Bill Collis, Simon Robinson and Ben Kent of The Foundry, the UK visual effects developer that created the software.

Kokaram is a senior lecturer in the Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering at Trinity College in Dublin.

He describes his specialisation as "a funny discipline that has arisen over the last 20 years or so." The process tracks the motion of objects in pictures automatically, and companies like Nike, Vodafone and the BBC have used its principles.

Originally from Sangre Grande, Kokaram has lived and worked in Ireland since 1998. He left Trinidad in 1986 to study at Cambridge University, where he did his PhD and was a research fellow in the Department of Engineering.

He's published over 80 articles on video processing and has written a book, *Motion Picture Restoration: Digital Algorithms for Artefact Suppression in Degraded Motion Picture Film and Video*. He's also a director of Green Parrot Pictures, a small company building software cores to enable motion picture restoration.

But his next major project involves a personal passion—cricket.

"A big problem for sports channels is trying to produce highlights of cricket matches. As you have more and more matches on, there are usually not enough personnel to create highlights packages for all the events. We believe it is possible, with video analysis, to make an automated highlights package."



Dr Bill Collis, head of research and development, *The Foundry*, left, and Trinidadian Dr Anil Kokaram show off their Oscars after the Scientific and Technical Achievement Awards hosted by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills, California