

Shh, I'm getting an Oscar for my special effects

BY ROSS MCGUINNESS

HE HAS made Bond more bold, the X-Men more exciting and Charlie's factory more chocolatey.

He even had the power to make King Kong – the loudest monkey in the jungle – less noisy.

If you watch a blockbuster movie these days, chances are a lecturer at Trinity College, Dublin has played a part in getting it to the big screen.

And now he has been given an Oscar. Dr Anil Kokaram, from the college's electronic and electrical engineering department, is part of a team which has revolutionised the film industry.

He will receive the Scientific and Engineering Oscar at a ceremony in Hollywood tomorrow night.

The 39-year-old, originally from Trinidad and who lives in Bray, Co Wicklow, helped develop a special effects package used by major movie production companies.

Furnace software allows film-makers to fill in the gaps between shots when it comes to the editing process.

Objects or people can be removed from a shot, unwanted sounds can be erased and slow-motion action can be enhanced.

It has already been used in films such as Casino Royale, X-Men: The Last Stand, King Kong, The Lord Of The Rings: Return Of The King and Charlie And The Chocolate Factory.



Top gong: Anil Kokaram

'I was astounded, I didn't think that we would get it,' said Dr Kokaram. 'It's such a difficult thing to win.'

In Casino Royale and X-Men, the technology was used for slo-mo shots, but King Kong, directed by Peter Jackson and created by his special effects team at Weta in New Zealand, posed a different issue.

'Weta came to us and said they had a problem,' explained Dr Kokaram.

'King Kong was too noisy, so the software was used to remove all the background noise from the film.'

The lecturer has always had a soft spot for movies which push the boundaries in special effects, and counts Blade Runner and The Fifth



Costumes: Consolata Boyle

Element among his favourites. 'I like anything that is not about real stuff – science fiction and comedies,' he said. 'I never dreamed I would have a career in movies.'

He is looking forward to picking up a golden statue this weekend.

'It will be great,' he said. 'There will be guys from Industrial Light and Magic there, so who knows, I might get to meet George Lucas.'

■ Meanwhile, Irish costume designer Consolata Boyle, who has been nominated for an Oscar for her work on The Queen, was in Dublin last night to pick up an award. She received a gong for Career Achievement at the inaugural Volta Awards.