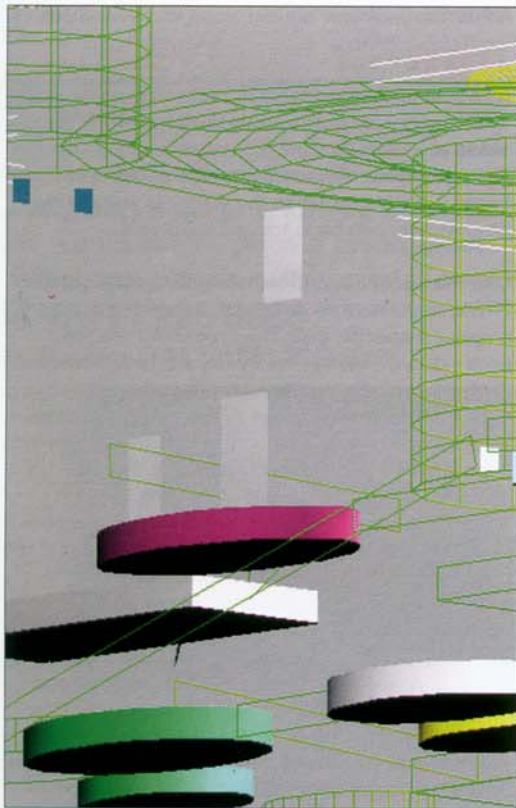
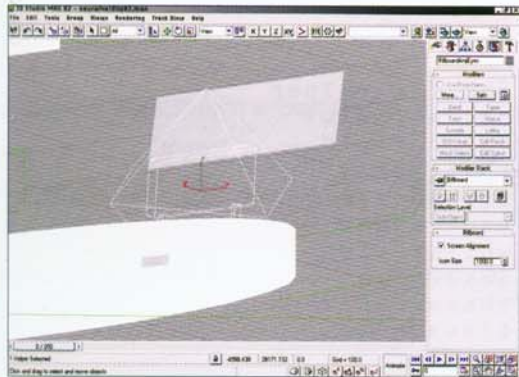
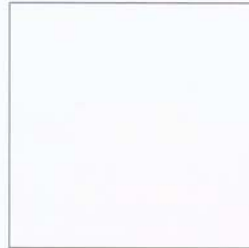


Billboards may be the scourge of our highways and byways, but in VRML land they are very useful



the amount of polygons, is an acquired discipline for every would-be VRML world-builder.

Modelers generate normal fields (and their corresponding normal Index fields) as a matter of course. If, on export, you remove the normal checkbox, you can save a load. In Example 1, the normals and animations are set, in Example 2 they are unchecked and reduced. The difference is virtually intangible, yet you can save a hell of a lot on the file size using this. It won't work for everything but it's always worth playing with.

Praise the LOD

The Level of Detail (LOD) helper allows the VRML world to become more intelligent. By displaying a less detailed object in the distance then, as the user draws nearer, a more detailed model is substituted. Neat!

As an additional tip, using LODs imaginatively can create some interesting morphing style animations and effects. Again, you have to play with the setting somewhat, but the effects can be intriguing and add a certain low-cost ambiance to your world.

In a similar download timesaving vein, billboards may be the scourge of our highways and byways, but in VRML land they're very useful. The neat

thing is, if you wanted to have a model or flat panel with an image mapped to it, wherein the image remains persistently in the user's field of vision, you can use a billboard helper. By attaching an image to a billboard helper the image will always appear in front of the user, no matter which way they 'turn'.

Texturing in .wrl land

Transparency and faded textures are hard to port across from MAX. The easiest way to obtain that all-important fade-out look (for example if you wanted a neon type glow) is to use the alpha export option from Paint* or Adobe Photoshop (or any other program that supports it) and export the file as .PNG.

Using .PNG files will enable you to have translucent and semi-transparent imagery in your world. All you have to do is get your bitmap - stick it in Photoshop, add an alpha channel to it (making sure it's in RGB mode), then select that alpha channel. Use the gradient fill on a selected area or the whole image (this depends wholly on your required end-product), black-white gradients are the only required colors here. Save the file as a .PNG and import it as a texture map into your MAX world. That will pretty much do it, make the model transparent and you get a great effect really easily