

DIGITAL COMBAT SIMULATOR

# THE RIGHT STUFF



A SHORT FILM BY J.P. FERRÉ  
IN MEMORY OF CHARLES E. YEAGER  
NARRATED BY VINCENT "JELL-O" AIELLO





**Air Force Flight Test Center, Edwards Air Force Base, California, USA.  
December 10, 1963.**

**Colonel Charles « Chuck » Yeager is testing the new NF-104A prototype, a fighter jet modified as an aerospace trainer that serves to help open the door to manned space flight, as future astronauts could experience high altitude and zero G training. In the morning of December 10, Yeager took the NF-104A up to 108,700 feet. It is now 2 pm and he is ready for his second zoom climb of the day...**

**This is a true story.**



**J.P. Ferré**  
Director

### **What motivated you to make DCS: THE RIGHT STUFF?**

This project has been in the works for two years and is made in memory of the great Chuck Yeager, who hopefully needs no introduction for any aviation enthusiast. As *The Right Stuff* original feature film from 1983 is one of my favorite movie of all time, I always wanted to know what really happened to Yeager during his zoom climb mission, as we know the scene depicted in Kaufman's film is too short and quite far from the truth. As a director, with the powerful graphics of DCS World and with the help of visual effects and sound design, I saw a great opportunity to deliver a story that could make the audience understand a little bit better what was the feeling of being a test pilot during the 1960s.

### **From the idea to the finished product, how long did it take for you to make the film?**

Strangely, I started thinking about this project in November 2020, just a few weeks before Yeager passed away... It took me about six months of historical research about the NF-104A program and the life of Chuck. For the following two or three months, during the summer of 2021, I had to wait for the VSN team to make the private NF-104A Mod with accurate markings. Of course, we also had to make some tests, to be sure the aircraft would behave like it's supposed to, and for the purpose of the story. Then, a year and a half of production was needed, from September 2021 to December 2022, only on my free time, between professional projects. Within DCS World, I recorded about 15 hours of footage, and half of it went to trash before even ending in the editing software.

### **What was the biggest obstacle you faced in completing this film?**

To me, the most challenging part of this film was, once again, voice recording. To find good actors within the game community, to explain (in English) how to act and speak because of the military vocabulary, etc. For the narrator, I wanted a voice that sounds familiar and immediately thought about Vincent Aiello from *The Fighter Pilot Podcast*. He's very well known within the military aviation community, all around the world, and at first, I was sure he wouldn't be available for the project. But he kindly agreed to land his voice. I was so honored!



### How did the Premiere go?

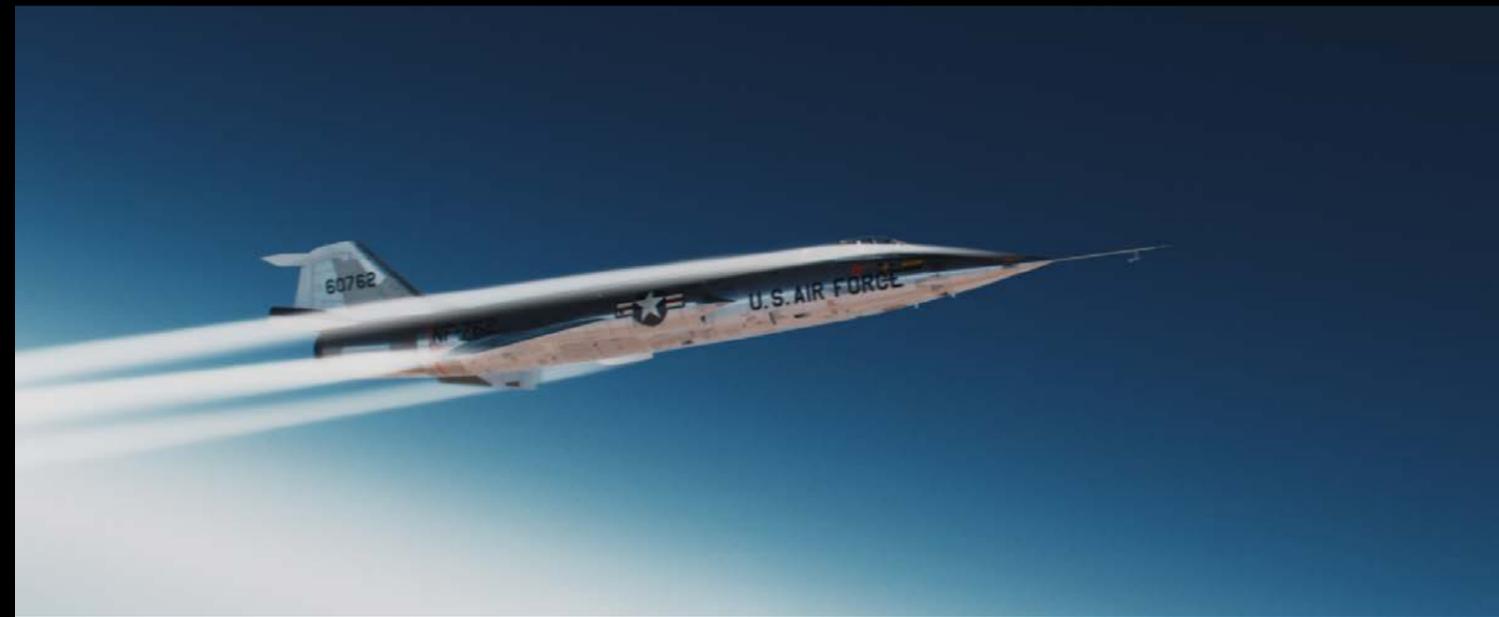
I was so nervous and scared that something goes wrong! But it went very well and the audience reaction really warmed my heart. Making a movie takes a lot of time, energy and dedication, for any director. So, reading reviews and comments are always rewarding. How engaged an audience can be while watching the story you're telling then is a very beautiful thing to witness, always.

### What inspired you to become a filmmaker?

I guess I owe my grand-father and father my passion for cinema, as they both showed me a lot of movies since my very early age. Western or noir films with one, sci-fi and drama with the other. I always enjoyed telling stories to others using moving pictures, either they're animated drawings, captured frames on film, digital or whatever. There's something unreal about it when you think about the process. Like many filmmakers have already said before, it's like entering a dream. He can be an escape for some people, and I like the idea that I can be the hand to take for starting a journey.

### What is next for you?

Still using tools from DCS World, I hope to make another short film, this time an adaptation of the comics series BUCK DANNY! A dream that would come true because I grew up reading these adventures and also, because it's never been done before! And I'm still in the writing process of my first feature film, produced by The Project. It should enter pre-production in the coming year, fingers crossed!





## Alexis Maingaud Composer

**Can you talk about how you approached the music for DCS: THE RIGHT STUFF? How did you work with J.P. Ferré?**

J.P. Ferré immediately communicated to me his love for the original film and its music. He really wanted us to include the different themes from Bill Conti's score. Conti's soundtrack is a true masterpiece of efficiency. I was also inspired by scores that are aesthetically close, such as Superman by John Williams. Despite the inspirations, I remain someone who has to feel the movie. That's why J.P. and I watched the film early on and worked out where and how the music would take shape.

**This short film takes place in the 1960s and has been recorded using in-game footage from a flight simulator. What were your thoughts when writing the music?**

The meticulous details of DCS stand in stark contrast to the '83 film pictures. That was a choice J.P. made and I think, from a musical point of view, I made a similar choice. The idea was to start from Bill Conti's thematic material, while giving it a more contemporary sound and feel, without denaturing the spirit of the original work. We started with the same instrumentarium: vintage synthesizers and a symphony orchestra with predominantly brass instruments.

**What was the most challenging part for you, in writing this score?**

I quickly realized that tackling The Right Stuff is tackling a monument. The film has a cult following and the fan community knows every note of the score... I think that was the biggest challenge: not to disappoint the most fervent fans of Bill Conti's work, and at the same time to be able to surprise them and catch their ear with a more modern interpretation of the score. But I did as any other film I approach. I let myself be impregnated by the atmosphere of the film, by the musical and sound universe. What comes out of it, mysteriously, is only the reflection of this impregnation. I remain very instinctive, I believe that it is especially that, my "touch".





**What software are you using for composing?  
Were there any major obstacles to be overcome?**

We didn't have the resources to record real musicians for this project. I had to work with the classic arsenal of today's film music composer: DAW software and virtual and real instruments. I work on Cubase and with several types of virtual instruments, mainly with Spitfire, Cinesamples, Orchestral Tools, and several hardware and software synthesizers. The main challenge of the film's music was to be able to keep, at times, a certain velocity and elasticity, which can be complex with virtual instruments.

**Do you think there's a difference between composing for a animated and a live action film?**

The evolution of digital special effects, but also of game simulators like DCS, will tend to blur the borders between animation and live action. That's why I don't really make any difference between the two in my way of composing. The art direction can... Animation can have an aesthetic side that can clearly stimulate the poetry of a composer's language. But the look of an actor or an actress can also change everything in my mind. I would say that the only rule is that there is no rule. What counts is what you feel when you see the pictures for the first time!





## Edouard Potier Colorist

### Edouard, how did you approach the color grading on DCS: THE RIGHT STUFF?

First, the director J.P. Ferré asked me to watch his short film without saying anything. I immediately wanted to work on this singular project, with footage coming from a digital simulator! The main challenge was quite clear to me. The film needed to find his own look, so we could forget the "game" aspect from DCS World. Then, we watched several scenes from the original feature, so we could understand the artistic intentions from the director Philip Kaufman. The amazing work from his director of photography Caleb Deschanel gave such a very textured movie, with lot of grain that evolves throughout the scenes, as well as deep colors and contrast, typical of that time. So, we tried to put these elements in our own look for DCS: The Right Stuff.

### How did you find your own sensitivity on this project, while having all the director's intentions in mind?

J.P. Ferré's short film talks about an important moment in aviation history, taking place during the 1960s. If J.P. found his inspiration in the original movie from 1983, the tribute made to all these test pilots and the prototypes they flew was something to keep in mind for my approach on the color grading. I have worked on many documentaries and I admire these kinds of directors like J.P. Ferré who make a huge amount of historical and technical research before starting a project. We looked at many vintage pictures from the US Air Force, we wanted the artistic direction to be faithful to the time period, of course.

### What was the main challenge for you and the director to get the color grading right, with footage coming from a digital simulator?

This short film is self-produced by J.P. Ferré. He worked alone on capturing all the footage, with his own computer, meaning he couldn't get the highest quality he wanted, with basic 8 bits color sampling. We already had this obstacle on a previous DCS project made by J.P., DCS: TOP GUN MAVERICK & GOOSE in 2020. Since then, DCS World has improved a lot. Nonetheless, many shots were « polluted » by banding effects and the saturation level on some colors was way too high. Also, all the different textures and lightings from the scenery and the aircraft are smooth and realistic. There's no optical filter. So, we had to work on this aspect to get the fuselage more organic and create a white Pro Mist effect in the best way as possible, or even try to differentiate the colors to give the sky and ground textures more life in them.



## Were they any obstacle for you inside the software Da Vinci Resolve?

For this kind of project with many challenges, Da Vinci Resolve is a very complete software with a lot of possibilities that can seem too vast sometimes, but when we managed to focus on our priorities, it can be quite effective! We blended many tools to deal with all the flaws coming from the footage. Some shots would have benefited more work with more people involved, but there wasn't any money available. For instance, we worked on the helmet visor to decrease the pilot's face, which had no emotion at all, but to be sure that we could still feel the human presence behind it.

## In your opinion, is there any difference between the color grading process for an animated film, and live action one?

When I work on a fiction, we always start by thinking about the look of the film during pre-production, before the shooting even begins, with both the director and the DOP. Because J.P.'s short film is again self-produced, we didn't have all that prep work and had to deal with the look only at the end of production. But in reality, the approach is absolutely the same, the questions have to be asked on the artistic direction, either it's a live action film or an animated. In both genres, the color space management remains a key step in the production, to get the right look for a film.





TITLE **THE RIGHT STUFF**  
GENRE **ACTION / BIOPIC / MACHIMINA**  
YEAR **2022**  
TIME RUNNING **12 MINUTES**  
IMAGE RESOLUTION **2K**  
ASPECT RATIO **2.39**  
COLOR/N&B **COLOR**  
FPS **30 FPS**  
SOUND **5.1 / 2.0**  
LANGUAGE **ENGLISH**

NARRATOR  
CHUCK YEAGER  
GROUND CONTROL  
BUD ANDERSON  
EDWARDS ATC

DIRECTED & EDITED BY  
MUSIC COMPOSED BY  
SOUND MIX BY

VISUAL EFFECTS BY

COLOR GRADING BY

VINCENT "JELL-O" AIELLO  
JAMES "FIREHOUSE" TAYLOR  
JOSEPH "BUCCANEER" GIESE  
TIMOTHY "EMERALD" FRERKING  
RAPTOR DAD GAMING

J.P. FERRÉ  
ALEXIS MAINGAUD  
VEGA PROD  
LIONEL GUENOUN  
IIW STUDIO  
J.P. FERRÉ  
PAUL GAULIER  
VINCENT REMOND  
LUX  
EDOUARD POTIER



**WATCH THE MOVIE HERE:**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQidYOXGoRY>**