How to outsource a game trailer

Ralf C. Adam

From draft...
...to final render

- Ralf C. Adam

- Managing Director Virgin Lands GmbH

- >20 years in the games industry

- Contributed to >80 games

- Tutor at Games Academy in Berlin & Frankfurt

- Hobbys: Movies, Games, Gadgets, Soccer, Karaoke

- Private Website: www.tigerteam-productions.de
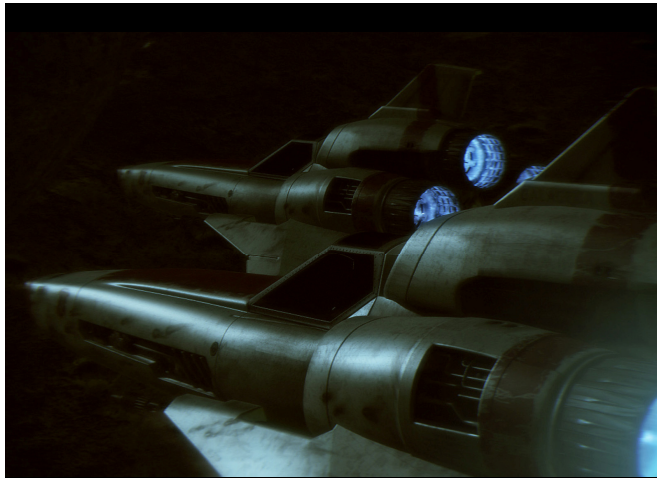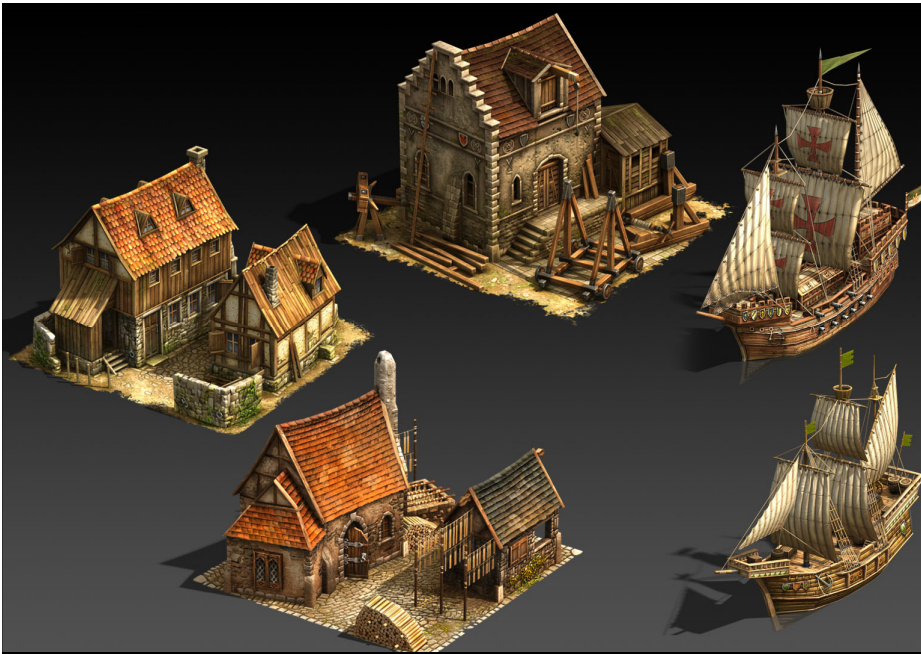
- Studio for 3D graphics, video & animation

- Founded in 1997

- >25 employees

- Long expertise in graphic production for games

- CGI Render Videos, Real-Time 3D in-game graphics

- Since 2008 also production of full feature CGI movies

- Track record incl. Ubisoft, Sony, Take2, Bigpoint, Goodgame a.o.

- Winner of Red Dot Award, Animago, DEP and others

- www.virgin-lands.com
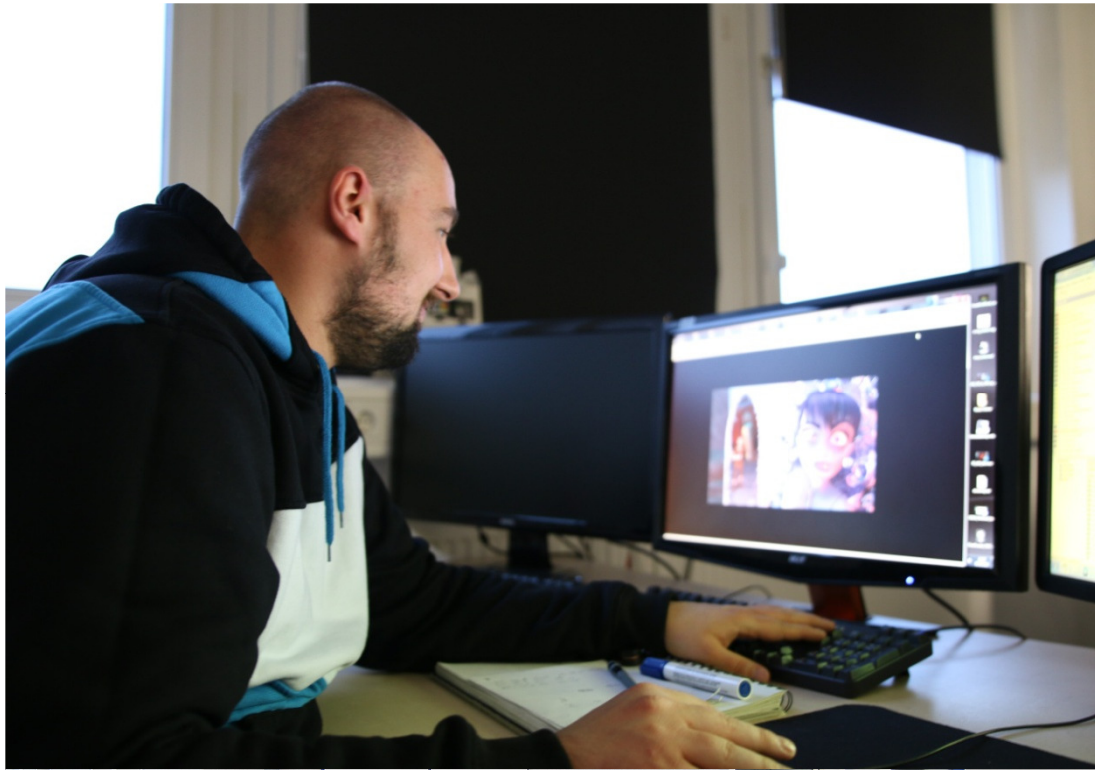
- Production of assets with an external service provider

- For game development:

    o Graphics: frequently, easy

    o Audio: frequently, easy

    o QA: frequently, medium

    o Code: rarely, hard

    o Level-Design: rarely, hard

    o Game-Design: rarely, very hard

- Depending on Outsourcing-Partner: high to premium quality
  - Outsourcing studio has a lot of specialists & expertise
  - Developer can benefit from external know-how
- Developer can focus on high priority tasks internally
  - Work load removal from internal team members
- Cost efficiency
  - Outsourcing studio usually has a lot of libraries & tools
- Less overhead and staffing cost for developer – better projectable fixed cost
- Development time can be easier scalable (and even accelarated) through use of outsourcing/external service providers
- Outsourcing „forces" developer to plan all requirements more thoroughly beforehand (developer „becomes" a publisher himself)
- Reduced Feature-Creep: Internal development tends to hide cost caused by feature creep – with outsourcing cost become obvious

- Transfer of internal knowhow/expertise outside the developer

- Loss of control

- Less gain of expertise for future projects

- Disclosure of confidential information

- Loss of progress tranparency/visibility

- Makes rapid reaction when facing change request and agile planning harder (team cannot develop via „acclamation" any longer)

- Outsourcing requires detailed planning/pre-production upfront
  - Asset lists & definitions have to be prepared thoroughly beforehand before communicating to outsourcing studio
  - Otherwise high amount of thrashing
- Outsourcing means higher communication workload
  - Bad idea: Using outsourcing as a solution for internal lack or flaws in communication and/or workflows
- How to mitigate lack of visibilty in project progress:
  - Milestones & Mini-Milestones; detailed approval steps & processes
  - Important: detailed requirements/asset lists as part of contract
- Risk of transfer of internal expertise
  - More critiacal when outsourcing code, less for graphics
  - On the other hand: works both ways – developer can also benefit from know-how of outsourcing studio

- Warning: Outsourcing is not cheaper than creating the assets internally (can be even more expensive, depending on level of quality of studio)

- Advantage: No fixed cost for employees

- Instead: fixed cost per asset. Easier to calculate. At least, when working with outsourcing studio on cost/per asset base (strongly recommended)

- Can be different when working with individual freelancers
  o Freelancers are usually cheaper than full outsourcing studios
  o But: working with a lot of different individuals means more overhead and coordination on developer side
  o Furthermore: planning risk when freelancer gets sick/"disappears" (which can be compensated when working with outsourcing studio)
  o Also: Freelancers usually work on hourly/daily rate. Check upfront: what do you get for your money?
  o Last but not least: problem of KSK (Künstlersozialkasse) = additional cost (Germany only!)

- Outsourcing helps saving cost when done right, but it can get very expensive very fast when done wrong (too little preparation, unclear or changing requirements etc.)

- Advantages when planned properly:
  - Manpower only booked for a fixed period of time
  - No idle phases of artists developer has to pay for
  - Gives full control of operational cost
  - Fixed price per asset
  - Flexibility and easy scaling of manpower

- Outsourcing partner (at least when working with big studios) can balance sudden absence of staff without delaying the schedule

- Allows for changes in project scope (but needs to be negotiated separately)

- Risk shifting
  - Sickness, holidays etc. are not risk of developer any longer

- Clear definition of Single-Point-of-Contact for communication on both sides (developer & outsourcing studio)
- UX/UI harder to outsource as more directly related to game design
- Approval of sketch/concept art recommended for each asset before modelling/rendering work for respective asset starts
- Detailed and final asset- and animation-list upfront for cost calculation
- FMVs: Start embedding sound/music as early as possible
- Helpful for outsourcing studio: direct embedding into development environment
  - Viewer (and/or latest build) to check assets within final game environment (lighting, shading etc.)
  - Clear naming conventions

- From a pure production perspective there is no difference between a short 20sec TV-Commercial and a 80min full-feature CGI movie

- Trailer can have any given length

- TV-Spot usually lasts only 20sec (above 20sec gets too expensive in broadcasting cost)

- Beware: The last 4sec out of these 20sec at the end have to be allocated for fading of logos, leaving only 16sec for the trailer itself/the story

- This equals max. 6 – 8 cuts, each 1 to 3 sec

- Alternative: one single long shot (good example: 2nd Goodgame Empire TV-Spot done by Virgin Lands)

- Pro-Tip: Create a trailer right from the start in a way that it can be re-cut later down to a 20 sec TV Spot as well (pay one – get two)
  - Has to be considered upfront
  - Script, story and structure need to be created in a way that allows for such re-cutting
- Pro-Tip: All in-game assets that can be delivered from developer to outsourcing studio help saving cost (even low-res assets for a hires trailer can help)
- Beware: Rights for music can be tricky, and is usually valid only for one year and certain kind of usage (YouTube/Internet vs. TV)
- Same goes for rights of voice acting: Voice for TV usage is more expensive than for YouTube (even when using same actor)
- Beware: TV broadcasting stations usually do their own dubbing with their own actors anyway

- Who writes the script?
  - Advantage developer: they know their game inside out
  - Advantage outsourcing studio: they know what works best with regards to cuts, lengths, assets and cost
  - Best solution: close collaboration of both partners
- Budget: You get way better results when communicating existing budget to outsourcing studio upfront
- Don't let them reach for the stars first and afterwards cut down the concept and ideas -> leads to Frankenstein'ish trailer/spot

Compositing → Color/Depth Grading → Audio → FINAL MOVIE
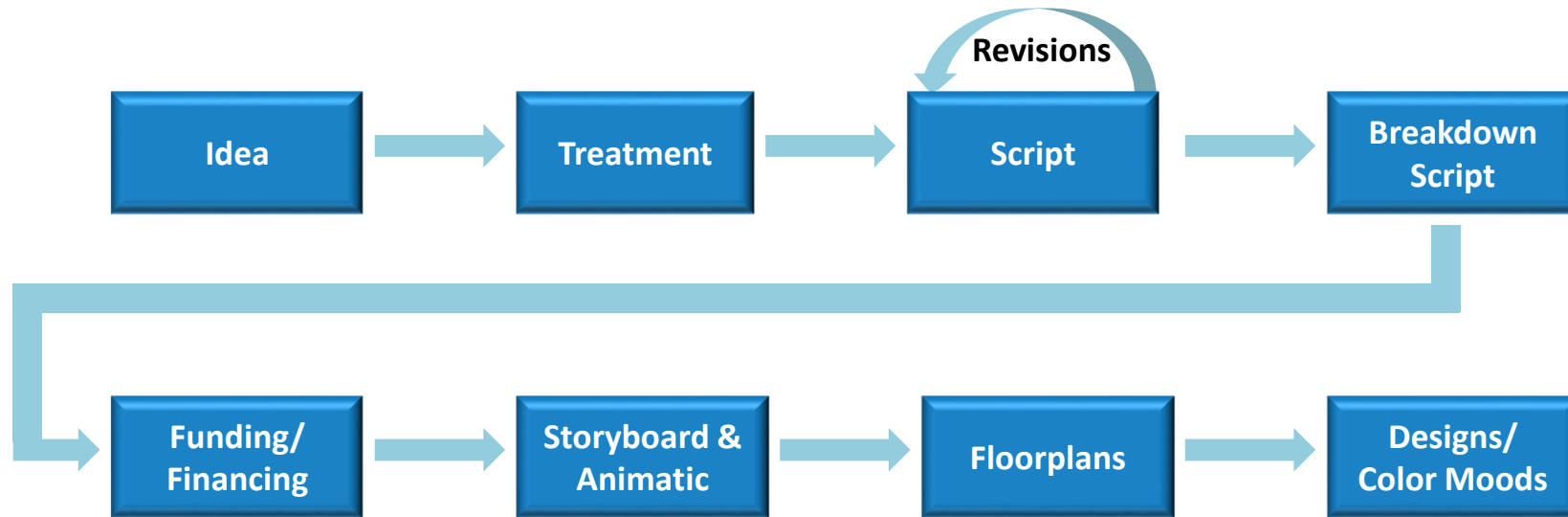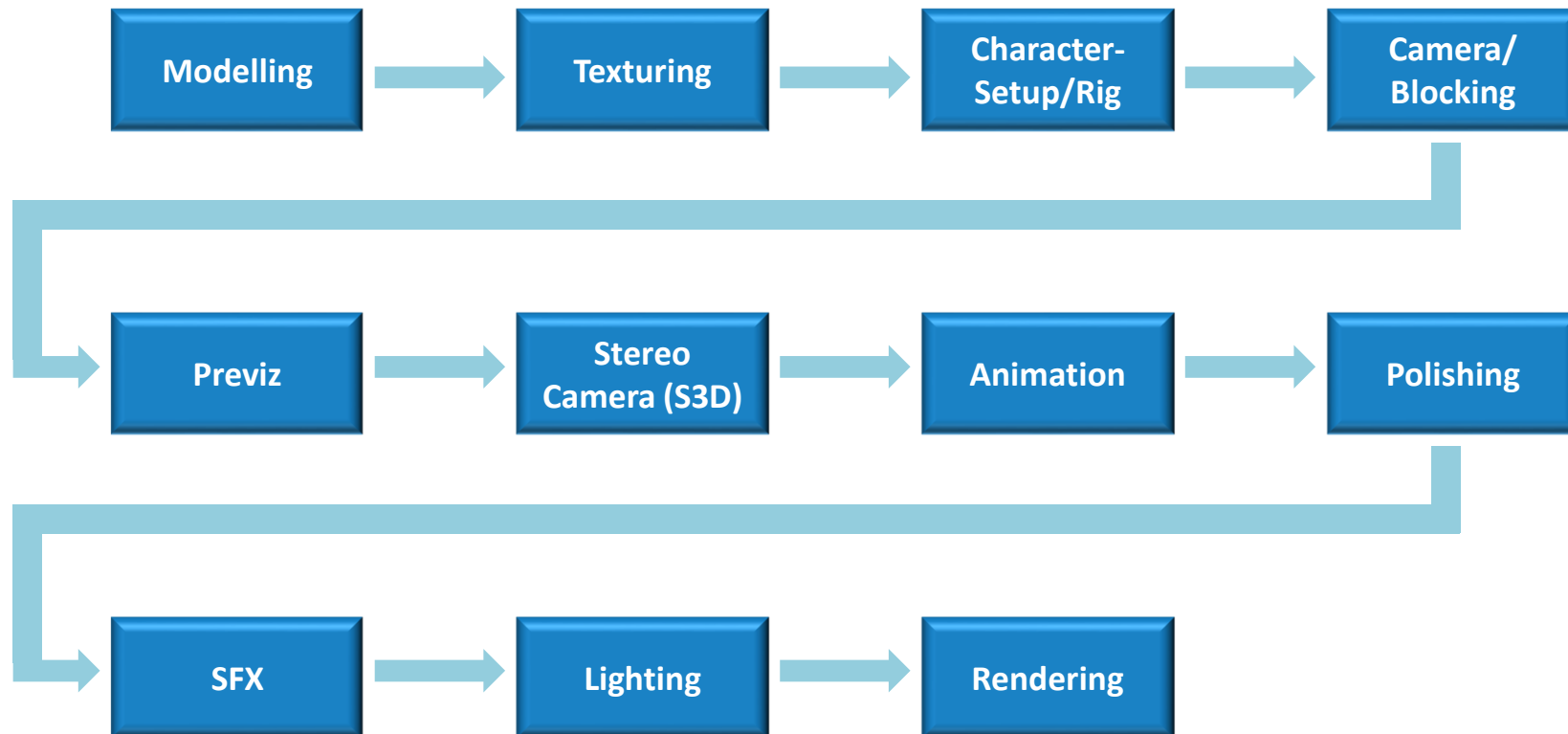
As MARIE ducks back down into her suitcase GRANDMA drops her head in defeat.

8. INT. schlOTTER'S FACTORY - eaRLY MORNING

In the depths of a dark, old factory we see a short sighted, somewhat rotund man (SERGE) siting on the edge of a stool observing the scene on a monitor. The picture's not good, but he's watching GRANDMA and MARIE from the DRONE'S POV. He's clearly engrossed in the drama.

> ScHLOTTER (off)
> Those shoes do *not* go with that hat.
> (Off) Diese Schuhe passen wirklich nicht zu
> dem Hut.

SERGE has been joined by PROFESSOR SCHLOTTER, a thin, nasty looking man in a morning coat who's carrying rolled up blueprints under his left arm and a walking stick in his right. SERGE continues to look at the monitor.
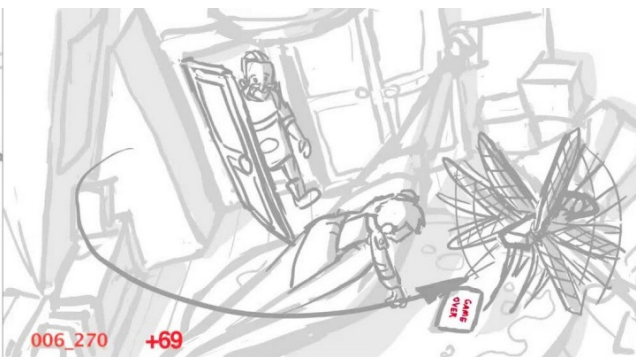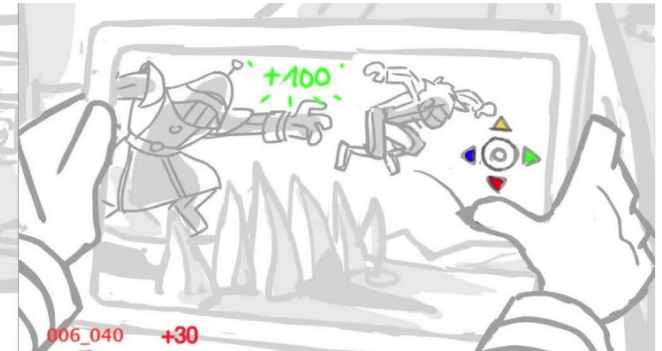
> SERGE
> I know! And you should have seen
> the purse she tried to put with
> that ton I laughed so hard I

SCRIPT GAME TV SPOT

SCHNITT	BESCHREIBUNG	SPRECHER	ZEIT
Schnitt 01	Aufblende von schwarz auf eine Landkarte, nicht ganz unähnlich der aus dem Intro von "Game of Thrones". Kamera zoomt dabei langsam auf die Karte, während aus der Karte heraus Gebäude "wachsen", diese bleiben aber noch abstrakt und modellbausatzartig.	*KÖNIG: "Um ein Königreich...*	3 sec
Schnitt 02	Gegenschuss aus einer näheren Perspektive mit vielleicht eher gekippterer Kamera - weitere Gebäude wachsen aus dem Boden, wir bleiben noch abstrakt	*...zu regieren...* *ALT* *KÖNIG: "Als König..."*	2 sec
Schnitt 03	Selbe Szene, anderer Kamerawinkel, die Gebäude materialisieren sich weiter, bleiben aber immer noch Modelle, wie sie normalerweise auf einer Karte stehen.	*...muss man sein Imperium*	2 sec
Schnitt 04	Kamera fährt/dreht sich über den Marktplatz der entstandenen Burg hinweg, aus einer Vogelperspektive (Kamera eher nach unten, kein Horizont), ähnlich der Schlusskamera im Siedler 6 Intro. Die Gebäude fangen an, von den Modellbausätzen in richtige Gebäude zu morphen. Die Straßen sind plötzlich belebt, über den Marktplatz laufen Leute. Ein Trupp Soldaten marschiert auf.	*...nicht nur errichten,*	3 sec
Schnitt 05	Die Kamera fährt über die Stadt hinweg, und die Soldaten marschieren durch das Stadttor nach draußen. Die wird wieder zum Modell, ebenso die Soldaten davor. Die Kamera zeigt	*...man muss es auch*	3 sec

006_010 +20

006_020 +15

006_040 +30

006_060 +24

006_270 +69

006_280 +10

006_290 +24

006_340 +124

Source: The litte Medic/ © Wunderwerk

Schnitt 02

Engineer-Schiff wird bombardiert. Wasserfontänen direkt neben dem Schiff.
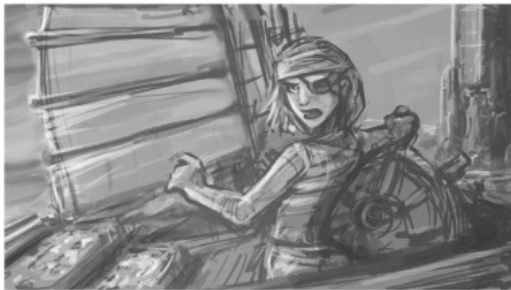
Lauflänge: 2 Sekunden Kurzversion | 3 Sekunden Langversion

Schnitt 03

Engineer am Steuerrad, im Hintergrund sind die Angreifer-schiffe zu sehen. Weitere Wasserfontänen.
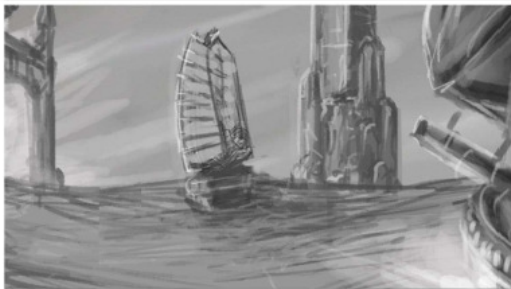
Lauflänge: 1 Sekunde Kurzversion | 2 Sekunden Langversion

Schnitt 04

Gegenschuss Engineer. Blick auf goldbeladenem Deck wird freigelegt. Engineer mit Blick auf Angreiferschiffe.

Lauflänge: 1,5 Sekunden Kurzversion | 2 Sekunden Langversion

Schnitt 05

Angreiferschiffe schließen auf, nähern sich Engineer-Schiff.

Gegen Ende der Szene kommt ein neues Schiff (Destroyer) von links hinter einer Säule in die Szene.

Lauflänge: 2,5 Sekunden Kurzversion | 4 Sekunden Langversion

Source: Kartuga/ © InnoGames

+00:02:37:22

Source: The litte Medic/ © Wunderwerk

Source: Spellforce / © JoWooD/Phenomic

Source: The 7th Dwarf / © Zipfelmützen-Film

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