

FILMLOOK^{INC.} NEWSLETTER

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www.filmlook.com

2005

A TEMP FOR ALL SEASONS

I was in Michael Toay's office, just finishing preparation on a project, when a question sort of subtly, in a roundabout way, came up. "Would you shoot a short for me?" Short, a.k.a. (to me) limited resources on every area, student project, lots of chiefs and way way too many folks dressed all in black. I try to stay away from them like the plague. Michael is a good friend. I heard a "yes" that sounded like my voice. What have I done?

The short was to be part of the 168 Hour Film Festival. You are given a random subject and then 168 hours or 7 days later you deliver a short (having written, cast, edited, scored and finished the bit in the given time.) So there is no way to even know what will be the best medium to shoot and what lights and crew you will need, if you don't know the story you are telling. It will be a challenge.

A couple of days in and the script arrives from Keith Ray Putman, who wrote and will direct the movie. OK, first discussions must provide answers to questions like, what story are we telling, what do we wish this to look like, and how many shooting days do we have? The look is to be an office, Dilbert World, kind of place. What does it look like? Well that is up to me in a large part, it will end up as a very slightly stylized reality. That is what will fit the low-key humor of the script.

Michael and I shuffle the equipment and crew list. The location is still undecided, but it will be what it is. We do not have time to create a complete cubicle cosmos on a stage, so it will be a real location. We will shoot High Definition, HDCAM at 23.98PsF, use Zeiss prime lenses, with all of the appropriate support and a fair sized grip and electrical package to go with it. All crewed accordingly, It sounds good...so far.

With the limited resources that will be available for the short, I wanted a security blanket for the show. At FILMLOOK, I frequently color correct a series in their da Vinci 2K suite. Naturally I wanted this included as a necessity for the final finishing of "A Temp For All Seasons". Tweaking all of the images to work together, with the ability to fix any little issues puts a wonderful final polish on any picture, perhaps even more important where there will be inherent limitations. We contacted Anna Cordova at FILMLOOK and, based on the script and the story, budgeted a 3 hour session which would give us a very "no-frills" correction but enough to be able to do some magic. With my personal experience in this suite, I knew we could do what was needed in that time. Having done many sessions with FILMLOOK's Allen Kelly in the da Vinci suite we've used, my confidence in this final aspect of the imaging of the production was high. One of the great things about a boutique operation like FILMLOOK, you know what equipment and more critically what people will be involved. It's really nice to know who will be covering your butt!

As the shoot day approached, there were a few small issues. They could not find a crew. Between pilot season, series still shooting, and NAB, Los Angeles was a ghost town. Essentially we ended up with a full top quality equipment package and myself and a soundman as the crew. Well everyone on the picture really pitched in to move gear, and a couple of actors that had smaller parts worked very hard learning new things as volunteer crewmembers.

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We were shooting. Of course not in the location we had thought, since 4 hours before call the location changed. Good thing the package was more generic than location specific.

We shot in a fluorescent-lit cubicle maze. Grey walls with red accents. It worked wonderfully. We then took color readings and did some camera settings and the lights were gelled to a start point for the color. The F900 HD camera was set-up to give me the look that I wanted to go into color correction with in order to ensure the information needed would be in the images, not the final correction. I am very picky about camera set-up, color and lighting, however in this case with a rather limited crew, I would not have the time to shoot the exact finished images I wanted. Instead, I made sure to shoot for the raw material. In color correction, color and contrast are close but not final. This is something I do not do all of the time, since it means I absolutely have to be in the color session or just take my chances on what I get, which is unacceptable. Not a problem on “A Temp For All Seasons” since I was supervising the correction.

Knowing the capabilities of Allen and the FILMLOOK da Vinci suite gave the opportunity to save a lot of set-up time. One particular scene was inside a closet that our hero was “banned” to. I wanted it gritty, contrasty midrange, and with a limited color palette that would still look acceptable on actor Robert Wu’s close-ups. Problem was, I had no time to do it, or perhaps more accurately, I wished to spend the limited time and resources elsewhere. So we used a special practical I wanted, set the camera to capture the broadest range of information and shot. Not the look of the show nor what I wish the finished scene to look like, but material that could be made into the look. There is a point at which you just have to push the button. Speed and time are crucial on the set. Knowing how we could change the images later at FILMLOOK, saved us lots of time at a point when it was really needed. It always makes me a little nervous to do this, but the images will be in good hands.

With the shooting completed and the picture edit locked, we arrived for the color correction session. Both the producer, Michael Toay, and the director, Keith Ray Putman, joined Allen and I in the suite. Within a few minutes of starting, when we locked the look of the main office cubicle world set, I turned to them to see broad grins. The pictures went from being great to taking on the professionalism I expect. When we reached the closet scene, Allen suggested starting with a “bleach-bypass” simulation filter he had pre-made. Pretty much exactly what I had been thinking when we shot. Within a few minutes we had slightly modified Allen’s filter settings and the look of the scene was established. This was an enormous time saving on the set with the ability to make it exactly what I was after. Talk about a “win-win” situation! Michael Toay pointed out a slight issue that was coming up, there is a point at which we see both the interior of the closet and the cubicle area outside as actress Avery Clyde comes into the room. A simple motion tracked correction and the concerns of the producer faded quickly. The scene was wonderful.

The correction was completed on schedule and the picture delivered to the festival organizers well before the deadline. Of the 14 categories being judged, “A Temp For All Seasons” was nominated for awards in 13, and won in 5 categories including the biggy, “Best Picture”. A Hollywood fairy tale ending if there ever was one.

With the limitation inherent in these types of projects, I view color correction as one of the necessities. It polishes the images while potentially saving a lot of time and money that would have been spent during principal photography. It is a balancing act, and not one to be taken lightly. As a Director of Photography I need to know what I can do in color correction, and then must have the time and resources to do it. If I was not going to be in the color correction session, or worse if there was to be no color correction session at all, I would have strived for a finished look on the set, despite time limitations, viewing conditions, and all the interference in that setting. FILMLOOK’s da Vinci suite was decidedly better suited to this end.

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WELCOME BACK!

FILMLOOK welcomes back hit series “That’s So Raven” to a fourth season on the Disney Channel. We also congratulate the series “The Suite Life of Zack and Cody” which has been another hit for Disney and has been renewed for a second season. Also, the critically acclaimed series “30 Days” produced by Morgan (Supersize Me) Spurlock for FX has been renewed for a second hit season. We at FILMLOOK Inc. congratulate the producers for their successes and are proud to be a part of the production of these popular series.

PICK UP FILMLOOK

TORONTO—The 30th annual Toronto Film Festival premiered the FILMLOOK® processed documentary “Pick Up the Mic,” a raw, revealing look at queer hip-hop that was produced by Allen Skinner and director Alex Hinton. The documentary explores the lives of gay, lesbian and transgender artists seeking success and validation through their music, as well as exploring each individual’s experiences with homophobia, gender issues and suicide. The documentary is the compilation of over three years worth of DV video that was edited then brought to FILMLOOK Inc. for final da Vinci 2K color enhancement, film simulation and titling. “Pick Up the Mic” was shown at The Toronto Film Festival September 11, 2005. For more information, go to www.pickupthemic.com <<http://www.pickupthemic.com>> .

TENNIS ANYONE?

LOS ANGELES—Spike TV aired the Maya Pictures/Higher Ground Entertainment documentary “Pancho Gonzales: The Latino Legend of Tennis”. This documentary features archive photos and interviews shot in video, processed and color corrected in FILMLOOK® with the da Vinci 2K. “Pancho Gonzales” is the story of a little known yet ultimately influential tennis player who single handedly elevated the game of tennis to a higher level of performance. He became arguably the greatest player of the game, influencing and winning admiration from such diverse players as Jimmy Connors, Rod Laver and Arthur Ashe. The entire documentary was brought to FILMLOOK for final film simulation and color timing prior to its Wimbledon and Los Angeles premieres. “Pancho Gonzales: The Latino Legend of Tennis” aired on Spike TV September 16, 2005. For more information go to www.heypancho.com.

MACBETH AND DA VINCI

HOLLYWOOD—Gold Cap Films has produced the film “Never Say Macbeth,” a comedy-horror film that was shot on DV and then brought to FILMLOOK for final da Vinci 2K color correction and final cut pro online finishing prior to festival release. “Never Say Macbeth” is the story of a theatre troupe struggling to perform Shakespeare’s “Macbeth” despite the odd and often grisly events threatening to derail opening night. The movie was shot on Panasonic DVX 100 and Canon XL 2 cameras. FILMLOOK

MACBETH AND DA VINCI – *continued*

was called upon to color time the scenes, create titles and complete final audio on the color timed master. “Never Say Macbeth” is currently being considered for nationwide film festival entry.

TAKING STOCK IN FILMLOOK

Some recent news and upcoming projects from our clients... Director Kirby Dick’s Academy Award-nominated “Twist of Faith” won the Audience award at the 2005 Amnesty International Film Festival and will be available shortly on DVD...HBO Sports has produced two documentaries—“Mantle” and “Dare To Dream: The Story of the U.S. Women’s Soccer Team,” both set to air later this year...Dale Fabrigar’s “TAG” has been accepted to the 2005 Los Angeles International Film Festival...Jeff Daly’s documentary “Where’s Molly” is now being edited based upon tremendous interest based upon a FILMLOOK processed presentation done for SFO Productions.

THE STATE OF THE COLLEGE IS GREAT!

J-NEX Media recently completed a series of five video presentations on FILMLOOK’s Final Cut system for the University of Southern California College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. Four of the pieces were shown at a kick-off celebration for the College’s \$400 million “Tradition and Innovation” fundraising initiative, the fifth was created for College Dean Joseph Aoun’s “State of the College” address to faculty in late September.

The challenge in all five projects was to tell each story in the first person without utilizing any narration. To accomplish the task, J-NEX Media president and senior producer David Nemer conducted nearly 20 hours of interviews with professors, major donors, students, university trustees and business and civic leaders. The ultimate goal was to carefully stitch together seamless, emotionally inspired stories about the College’s mission, what motivates faculty and donors; and where, through the initiative, the College can continue the momentum in education, research and community service it has developed over the past decade.

According to Nemer, the entire project was a wealth of riches. “We had an incredible client, the subject matter and people were fascinating, and we had a fantastic production team. Mike Oates, our videographer captured some truly compelling images, and FILMLOOK’s editor Ben Edwards helped bring it all together in a way that truly awed our client and audiences.” The team of Edwards, Nemer and J-NEX production manager Chris Wong took the hours of tape and from them created truly inspiring and emotional features. “It was like creating a giant jigsaw puzzle,” said Nemer. “But when we were done, the College’s ‘Wow Factor’ was evident from start to finish.” Nemer’s favorite comment about the project came in an email from the multilingual Dean Aoun after he saw the main presentation for the Tradition and Innovation Kick-Off. He wrote: “c’est tres bien la video”. To which we add, Merci!

*If you have a news item for the FILMLOOK Newsletter,
please email us at anna@filmlook.com and it will be included in our next issue.*