

FILMLOOK^{INC.} NEWSLETTER

SPRING

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2005

FOCUSING ON “WIDESCREEN” AND FILMLOOK

It would appear that the 4x3 aspect ratio is dead or dying, at least according to networks and studios that are posting and presenting their programming in HD, or at least in widescreen. While many new televisions being sold are 16x9 and will (hopefully) accommodate HD widescreen programming, most televisions operating today are still the old unfashionable 1950's style 4x3 aspect ratio. Most DVDs sold are presented in widescreen which make them compatible with new plasma and LCD widescreen televisions, yet letterboxing is still necessary for viewing widescreen movies on relatively square CRTs. How does a producer get and maintain the “widescreen look” during postproduction while being compatible with all those square tubes still in use out there?

There are a few ways to get the “widescreen look,” each with their own attributes and drawbacks. First, you could simply shoot with a regular video camera and crop off the top and bottom of the picture during post in order to get that “letterbox” widescreen look. This is an inexpensive option, but this is done at the cost of severe loss of picture information, since you have taken a full frame of video and thrown away about a fourth of its resolution. Simply making a letterbox from a 4x3 picture doesn't make it compatible with 16x9 televisions—and if you up-convert to HD, all you end up with is your letterboxed feature “floating” in a black widescreen sea. Also, if you have not composed for the “cropped” portions of the picture you risk cutting off people's heads or other important things when you apply the letterbox to your production.

The second option is to use an anamorphic lens adapter on your camera that squeezes the picture horizontally and will allow you to use the entire frame for a 16x9 presentation. The picture can be “unsqueezed” into a 4x3 letterbox for square tube televisions or 16x9 for widescreen televisions. However, there may be color fringing, vignette problems and resolution loss due to the inherent distortion of the image by the lens adapter. If up-converting to HD, there will still be some quality compromise. A camera operator and the DP must be extremely mindful of the lens adapter to prevent such occurrences.

The best option is to originate in HD or use an SD camera that can electronically switch to a 16x9 aspect ratio. This will utilize the entire frame and retain full resolution without compromise to the image. In SD, by staying in the full-frame squeezed look during the postproduction process (including editing, color correction and FILMLOOK), all options are available for either keeping the 16x9 for widescreen televisions and DVD presentation, or creating a letterbox version or a full screen center cut cropped version for square televisions. If it's in HD (16x9), later down-conversions can easily be generated in center-crop, letterbox or anamorphic. Keeping in mind that picture composition must be accommodated for 16x9 as well as 4x3 aspect ratios, this will ensure that all possible present and future presentations of a program will be maintained without image compromise.

RACE FOR FILMLOOK

LOS ANGELES—Crystal Springs Productions have finished “Race Across America,” a two hour documentary on the grueling 3000 mile transcontinental bike race that aired on NBC. The race, considered the most difficult endurance race in the world, features riders battling blistering heat in the Mohave Desert and constant fatigue and injury. Shot by over 25 camera operators using DV camcorders, the final master was edited to DV video then color corrected in FILMLOOK Inc.’s daVinci 2K room. “Race Across America” hosted by Jim Lampley, aired in January on NBC.

CONGRATS TO CHAIN CAMERA AGAIN

Congratulations to Chain Camera Pictures for their Academy Award nomination for best long form documentary for their film “Twist of Faith,” which was also nominated for best documentary film at this year’s Sundance Film Festival.

MARCH INTO MADNESS WITH FILMLOOK

NEW YORK—HBO Sports has produced “Perfect Upset: Georgetown vs. Villanova 1985,” a documentary about legendary Georgetown’s defeat in the NCAA finals by Villanova. The documentary combines present day interviews and vintage game footage all shot in video, processed and color corrected in FILMLOOK.

The improbable upset from 20 years ago still draws comparisons to David versus Goliath as players, coaches and fans reflect upon the game and surprising allegations of drug abuse by players. This is the latest of several dozen documentaries and television series that FILMLOOK has processed and color corrected for HBO over the years. "Perfect Upset" aired in March on HBO.

DUNKIN' WITH FILMLOOK

NEW YORK—TNT Networks produced the special "Mile High: Legend of the Dunk Contest," a documentary on the origin of the infamous and now highly anticipated event during the NBA All-Star weekend.

Hosted by Marv Alpert, the special features interviews with fans, coaches and legendary dunkmasters Julius Erving and Dominique Wilkins. Utilizing rarely seen archive dunk footage from the ABA and NBA and present day interviews, the entire program was color corrected and processed in FILMLOOK prior to airing on TNT. "Mile High" aired during the NBA All-Star weekend on TNT.

VELVET REVOLVER GUNNING FOR FILMLOOK

MIAMI—Hard rock performers Velvet Revolver has used FILMLOOK to process a concert that will be heading to DVD. Fort Productions and VR band mates preferred the look of one 24P camera used during the concert so much that FILMLOOK was asked to give the entire concert the "24P" look, giving the performance a "gritty, film feel."

NEW HEROES PREMIERE IN LA

HOLLYWOOD—Red Hill Productions has created a special episode of the New Heroes PBS series that focuses on Indian social entrepreneurs. The special, which was entirely shot in video, color corrected and processed in FILMLOOK, will be presented at the Arclight theatre in Hollywood on April 23rd at 7:00 PM as part of a festival of Indian films and filmmaking.

ON THE BOARDWALK WITH FILMLOOK

HOLLYWOOD— Writer and director John Bevilacqua has produced “Boardwalk Poets,” a feature starring Daniel Baldwin and James Oliver that was shot entirely in video and color corrected by FILMLOOK Inc.

The gritty, black comedy is set in the quirky world of Venice Beach and profiles the grifters, small time hitmen and odd characters living in the shadows beyond the tourist shops. The feature was shot in DV then brought to FILMLOOK for final color correction and duplication for festival consideration.

TAKING STOCK IN FILMLOOK

Some recent projects that have visited FILMLOOK Inc....RBC Ministries, Day of Discovery special Easter music pro-gram...fleisherfilm, Hope Village fundraising film...Rush films, Formula 113 car care spot...Drop Frame Pictures, “Day of Re-demption” thriller...Lipstick, Inc. “AllureSmile” teeth whitening infomercial...EC productions, “Alvarado Hospital” spots...Teleduction, “Welcome to Rockford” introductory video...Tomas Pictures, “Devil’s Highway,” psychological thriller...Alzheimer’s Association, “A Night at Sardi’s” David Hyde Pierce preshow introduction.

*If you have a news item for the FILMLOOK Newsletter, please call 818-845-9200
and it will be included in our next issue.*