

FOCUSING ON HD, HARD DRIVES AND CODECS

Now that high definition has arrived for most consumers in the form of reasonably priced HD televisions, it is now possible for most producers to justify the necessity to shoot in HD. After all, the engine that drives HD production are the number of eyeballs glued to HD sets, the sales of which in turn are driven by the amount of HD content available for viewing. HD content can come from over the air, satellite, cable, consumer HD formats, and (soon) internet downloads. Is it possible that all that HD content can move from camera to screen and stay looking pristine without suffering any loss in quality? Well, yes and no. It depends entirely how the material is recorded, captured, compressed, edited, affected, output, delivered and displayed. Obviously since there are many ways that the HD image can be manipulated, we will limit our focus in this quarter's article to capture and editing of an HD project and final output.

When an HD project is brought into editing, some of the first questions to ask are what format is it in? Is it HDCAM, DVC Pro HD, HDV or something else? Is it 59.94 interlace or 23.98 progressive? Is it 1080 or 720? This information will determine the most cost effective and efficient way to capture the video files for editing to maximize quality, but also being mindful of the space and throughput limitations of a hard drive array. Capturing HDV footage in 10 bit uncompressed HD-SDI will maximize quality, but it is also creates unnecessarily large video files. The bit rate of highly compressed formats such as HDV is small (25 Mbps) and will not benefit from a 10 bit HD-SDI capture at up to 220 Mbps. Also, if the client wishes to put the edited project back onto a hard drive, uncompressed HD-SDI may not play back properly on a slower drive.

Depending on the size and speed of the hard drive array, one option for capturing 10 bit SDI-HD is to use Prorez 422 HQ when capturing video on Final Cut Pro. HD files using Prorez HQ are roughly one-tenth the size of uncompressed HD-SDI and yet look equal in quality, exhibiting little to no compression artifacts or visible degradation. One caveat—Prorez HQ is extremely reliant on hardware processing or a fast video card such as the Kona 3 in order to fit the HD into such a small file, so rendering can be an issue and must be taken into account when scheduling editing time.

Once the project is edited and ready for output, it may be recorded to tape or transferred to a hard drive. It is highly recommended to transfer the project as an uncompressed quicktime file on a drive or output to an HD tape format such as HDCAM or HDCAM SR if tape delivery is required.

Why the drive for lossless compression? Isn't HD going to be compressed anyway when being transmitted or encoded on HD discs for consumers anyway? True, but the goal is to minimize compression artifacts in the first place and creating lossless, uncompressed video images up front is the best way to ensure fewer problems down the road, especially into the future. Compressing images that already suffer from compression artifacts only creates more noise and potentially rejectable image problems that can easily have been prevented by capturing, editing and output in the best manner possible right from the start. This will also ensure that future pathways in the way HD is delivered to consumers will not make your current HD project noisy, "lossy" and unusable.

HBO PROFILES THE BROWN BOMBER

HBO Sports has produced the documentary "Joe Louis: America's Hero Betrayed," an HD presentation featuring archive film footage, photos and interviews reflecting on the legendary boxer's troubled life. The special was brought to FILMLOOK for da vinci 2K color timing and FILMLOOK processing for the standard definition edition. The special examines Louis' struggle to gain entry into professional boxing, his involvement in WWII, his battles with the IRS and addiction to drugs in his later years. HBO Sports has brought several award-winning documentary specials exclusively to FILMLOOK for final color timing and film simulation prior to air. "Joe Louis" will air on HBO during Black History Month in February '08.

PASSION COMES TO FILMLOOK

Backlight Productions has finished postwork on the HD documentary "Pittsburgh Passion," a documentary on the women's full contact football team. "Passion" details the lives of the players and modest beginnings of the nation's first women's football league, including the cold morning practices and injuries every football player endures. The documentary combines interviews, archive and game footage and was brought to FILMLOOK Inc. for offline, online, titling and color correction.

HALFORD'S WAR

Metal God Entertainment is debuting the simultaneous theatrical and DVD releases of 'Fight War Of Words - The Film,' a concert/documentary featuring the songs and performances of Rob Halford's first solo band 'Fight.' The 90 minute documentary was brought to FILMLOOK Inc. for film simulation and da vinci 2K color timing prior to its worldwide premiere in theatres and on DVD.

'Fight War Of Words - The Film' combines behind-the-scenes, hand-held and pro-shot footage of Fight's rehearsals, band interviews and a full-length concert video recorded at over 20 different venues in 20 cities worldwide. 'Fight' is available on DVD worldwide.

ESPN'S WHO'S NO. 1 AGAIN

ESPN Classic is starting a new season of the series "Who's No. 1?"...the popular anthology series counting down the top twenty most influential, controversial and debatable moments and people in sports history. This season kicks off with "The Best Technical Innovations," examining the most influential changes in sports involving technology or equipment. The series is brought to FILMLOOK Inc. for film simulation and color timing before airing on ESPN Classic.

FILMLOOK HAS A LARRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS

Parallel Entertainment has produced for VH1 "Larry the Cable Guy's Christmas Spectacular," a traditional Christmas comedy-variety special with music and strippers. The outrageous holiday special also will be available as an extended, uncensored DVD, featuring appearances by Kid Rock, Jamie Kennedy, Penn Jillette and Tony Orlando. "Christmas Spectacular" was brought to FILMLOOK for HD color timing and finishing for both the VH1 and DVD versions. The VH1 "Larry the Cable Guy's Christmas Spectacular" will air throughout December.

BACK AT THE BARNYARD

O Entertainment is using FILMLOOK Inc. for its online mastering of "Back at the Barnyard," a Nickelodeon animated series that is a spin-off of the movie "Barnyard." Produced by O Entertainment the series is about animals that get into trouble and play pranks on their human owners. The series is brought to FILMLOOK for final online output to Digital Betacam.

BENNY FINDS BLISS AT FILMLOOK

FILMLOOK Inc. is currently preparing the digital cinema packaging for the movie "Benny Bliss and the Disciples of Greatness," a comedy about one man's war on technology and singing the blues. Benny Bliss is a former mental patient who sings the blues and is on a quest to rid the world of electronics that are "stunting man's evolution." The feature was brought to FILMLOOK Inc. for online, color timing and digital cinema preparation.

GOOD SPOT HSM ON ICE

Good Spot has produced an HD promo for "High School Musical: The Ice Tour," an ice show adaptation inspired by the popular Disney Channel movies. The HD spot was brought to FILMLOOK for online and color timing to address camera problems and matching colors within the promo. The HD promo is currently being used to promote the tour nationwide and is available online as an HD download.

ON THE HUNT WITH FILMLOOK

Morningstar Entertainment has produced "Manhunters: Fugitive Task Force," an HD pilot for Discovery Channel that was brought to FILMLOOK Inc. for HD color timing. The reality series follows a New York-New Jersey fugitive task force specialized in finding dangerous criminals. Morningstar has brought several projects to FILMLOOK Inc., including "The Secret Bible: Eden" and "The Tibetan Book of the Dead." The "Manhunters" pilot was produced for the Discovery Channel for a possible series.

*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.*

Happy Valentine's Day!