MOVIE MACHINE
THE ART AND TECHNOLOGY OF DIGITAL FILMMAKING

ISSUE 6 - OCTOBER 2013

MONTHLY ROUNDUP OF NEWS AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DIGITAL FILMMAKERS
MOVIE MACHINE DIGITAL CINEMA FESTIVAL * NEW MAC PRO * SMOKE 2013

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WELCOME TO MOVIE MACHINE MAGAZINE ISSUE 6

SO HOW GOOD DO THE DIGITAL CINEMA CAMERAS OF TODAY LOOK ON THE BIG SCREEN?

It is hard to know who to believe these days - do you believe the information companies put out about the specs of their equipment, read what people say on the forums or those who blog online. For me - I listen to myself and my own experience which is why I had to put images on the big screen, from the cameras I use, to see how they look.

There's a lot of talk about cinema quality, whether you shoot 2K or 4K, and is 1920 × 1080 good enough for the big screen? I'm not so interested in talk, I'm interested in action. What is the truth about putting images on the big screen. Only one way to tell and that's to do some tests.

It took a bit of organising – I come armed to the cinema with a laptop and DVI adapter. The cinema is letting me do the tests, they suggested plugging the laptop straight in or using BluRay (I've brought 2 red laser BluRay discs with me.) The other option is a 2K DCP file – that's not something I know how to create.

We plug the laptop straight in. The projector is a monster. I'm not going to give model numbers or specs, let's just say it's almost as big as a small car. From the booth I can see the images on the big screen. I walk downstairs into the theatre.

The images I've edited together is a selection of footage I have filmed with the Blackmagic Cinema Camera, Blackmagic Pocket Camera, and Sony PMW-F3. The results are fantastic!

Without doubt everything I'm watching is good enough for the big screen. Nice colours, nice depth to the colours, sharp images, deep blacks. And this is 1920 × 1080 ProRes.

Just for the test we swap over to the BluRays I've burnt and these look fantastic too. No problem with the images or audio – looks and sounds great. If I'd paid to see this as a feature film the results, certainly technically, are up to standard. No complaints, just good looking pictures!

I quiz the projectionist about 2K DCP files, which is the format cinemas throughout the world use to show feature films. The projectionist says 2K DCP would look better than the 1920 × 1080 which we are projecting. They also comment on the look of film being projected and how great that can look with a good print, and how terrible it can look with a print which is old and scratched to pieces.

So I've proved to myself that cinema quality is truly within our grasp, for each and every one of us. All this talk of cinema cameras is real! Not just sales and marketing, the real deal. Buy yourself a Blackmagic Cinema Camera and you are shooting cinema standard. Buy yourself a Sony F5 or F55 and you are there. A Canon C500 would also do the job nicely. Red, Alexa, there's a lot of choice out there. I'm also a believer in 1920 × 1080 – the XDCAM EX files I was looking at were shot at 8 bit 4:2:0. To my eyes – the results looked excellent. I have no doubt 2K and 4K would look better, though with nothing to judge my images against, except for the 1920 × 1080 files I provided, I have to say once again, the results looked truly excellent.

For the record this wasn't some backwater, out of town, low budget cinema with half the seating of a proper cinema; this was bang in the centre of London in Leicester Square. Not only that – I wasn't on my own. A friend, fellow editor, and motion graphics artist was with me for the tests. We had lunch afterwards and discussed what we had seen, and we agreed unequivocally, that what we had seen projected, direct off a Macbook Pro and also BluRay, was without any doubt up to cinema standard.

Photos: Ellen Young

ANNOUNCING: MOVIE MACHINE DIGITAL CINEMA FESTIVAL

ATTEND THE EVENT - SEE YOUR FOOTAGE ON THE CINEMA SCREEN.

Movie Machine is running a digital cinema event in the heart of London, Dec, 4 of this year. The aim is to show footage from many different cameras on the big screen, from affordable cinema to high-end cinema cameras. The event is a digital cinema festival; the 10 best films submitted will be shown on the big screen at the Prince Charles Cinema, Leicester Square, London, on the night of the 4th December.

Confirmed footage to be shown on a full-size cinema screen to include: the Blackmagic Cinema Camera, Blackmagic Pocket Camera, Sony F3, Sony F5, RED Epic, Canon 5D Mark III. We're working to bring together footage from as many cameras as possible to see how the results look on a full-sized cinema screen.

DIGITAL CINEMA FESTIVAL
Prince Charles Cinema
December 4, 2013

Produce a film between 1 and 5 minutes
Use any camera
Any subject, genre or style
Produce the film with "cinema" in mind

www.moviemachine.tv/digital-cinema-festival/

MOVEMACHINE.TV PRESENTS:

DIGITAL CINEMA FESTIVAL
LEICESTER SQUARE | LONDON | DECEMBER 4TH | 19:30

Movie Machine is proud to announce we will be running a Digital Cinema Festival, for one night only, at the Prince Charles Cinema in Leicester Square London, December 4, 2013.

SUBMIT YOUR VIDEO >   **REGISTER TO ATTEND >**

Location:
Prince Charles Cinema , Leicester Square, London
Date: 4th December 2013
Time: 7.30pm   Entry: £10

FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION>

1st prize: Blackmagic Cinema Camera! Runners Up: DaVinci Resolve; Sonnet Echo Express III; Edius Pro 7

WIN!
1st PRIZE FOR BEST FILM:
BLACKMAGIC CINEMA CAMERA!

Courtesy
HOLDAN

The rules are simple:

1. Only one entry per person allowed
2. Upload your entry to Movie Machine, which is to be a digital film of no less than 1 minute and no more than 5 minutes duration.
3. Your film can be of any subject, any genre, however, the goal is create something cinematic. You choose the camera, the style, and the subject. Keep in mind, your film will be judged on its cinematic merits - taking into account, story and execution, technical details, camerawork, lighting and editing technique.
4. Perhaps you will submit a killer music video, an amazing selection of timelapse images, a short horror movie, a comedy, documentary, experimental - whatever you like. So long as your production is longer than 1 minute and shorter than 5 minutes, and created with cinema technique in mind, then we want to see your work!
Attend the Cinema Event, Leicester Square, London, December 4

The 10 best entries will be shown on the evening of December 4, at the Prince Charles Cinema in Leicester Square, London. Doors open at 7.30pm. This will be a jam-packed evening showing off the 10 best films submitted to the Cinema Festival, and also featuring a full lineup of presentations about digital filmmaking. Full agenda to be revealed very soon.

Conditions of entry

1. Your digital film must be longer than 1 minute and shorter than 5 minutes
2. The film can be on any subject, any style you choose, keeping in mind we will be looking for the cinematic technique in your work
3. You can be of any age, however, if you are under 18 you will need a parent/guardian to submit your film. Regardless, the person who made the film will receive full credit
4. You, the filmmaker, retain copyright of your work, however Movie Machine retains the right to show your work at the film festival in Leicester Square on December 4, 2013 and also on the Movie Machine website. Excerpts of your film may also be used for promotional purposes on the Movie Machine website and for further Movie Machine events.
5. Films can be sent through via the Movie Machine Uploader (up to 2 GBs) Please encode in as high resolution as possible - you may be contacted to supply a ProRes encode at 1920 x 1080.
6. Films will be judged on their cinematic merits - you can use any camera you choose, however, the goal is to create something which looks like cinema
7. Entries must be received by November 26 to be included in the film festival
8. Entries are open to filmmakers throughout the world. So long as your entry has been received as a digital file, or physical copy, by November 26, then you are in the running to win

MOVIE MACHINE DIGITAL CINEMA FESTIVAL, LONDON DEC. 4

WATCH THE VIDEO >>

This will be a jam-packed evening showing off the 10 best films submitted to the Cinema Festival, and also featuring a full lineup of presentations about digital filmmaking. Full agenda to be revealed very soon. So dig through archive or pick up a camera and shoot, produce a film between 1 and 5 minutes, and you will be in the running to win 1st prize of the Movie Machine Digital Cinema Festival and to have your footage shown on the big screen, in Leicester Square, at the Prince Charles Cinema, London, December 4.

SONY PXW-Z100: PROFESSIONAL HANDHELD 4K CAMCORDER

WATCH THE VIDEO >>

The PXW-Z100 professional 4K handheld XDCAM camcorder features a 1/2.33-inch Exmor R CMOS sensor with 16 million pixels. The camcorder is ideal for creating stunning 4K content (4096 × 2160) at 50 fps (frames per second) or 60 fps. The camcorder makes it easier for everyone from high-end cinema to entry-level productions to work in the 4K world.

COMMENTS ON 4K: PHILIP HODGETTS

WATCH THE VIDEO >>

Philip Hodgetts is a veteren of the digital video scene. He is known throughout the industry and can be described in many ways: a technologist, editor, industry pundit, podcasting veteran and specialist in new distribution. Philip Hodgetts has 30 years experience in production and post; since 1994 all in the digital realm. He is a recognized authority on the changing nature of the digital landscape and has an enviable record of accurately predicting the implication of changing technology over the last decade.

ARRI AMIRA: THE NEW DOCUMENTARY-STYLE CAMERA

WATCH THE VIDEO >>

ARRI proudly introduces AMIRA, a versatile documentary-style camera that combines exceptional image quality and affordable CFast 2.0 workflows with an ergonomic design optimized for single-operator use and extended shoulder-mounted operation. Ready to pick up and shoot straight out of the camera bag, AMIRA is hardy enough to take anywhere and features in-camera grading with preloaded looks based on 3D LUTs, as well as 200 fps slow motion.

ALL NEW MAC PRO - PRICING AND SPECS.

Select your Mac Pro

NEW

Quad-Core and Dual GPU

3.7GHz Quad-Core Intel Xeon E5 processor
12GB 1866MHz DDR3 ECC memory
Dual AMD FirePro D300
with 2GB GDDR5 VRAM each
256GB PCIe-based flash storage[1]
Free Delivery

£2,499.00
Includes VAT of approx. £417.00.*
Financing available

Coming in December.

NEW

6-Core and Dual GPU

3.5GHz 6-Core Intel Xeon E5 processor

16GB 1866MHz DDR3 ECC memory
Dual AMD FirePro D500 with 3GB GDDR5
VRAM each
256GB PCIe-based flash storage[1]
Free Delivery

£3,299.00
Includes VAT of approx. £550.00.*
Financing available

Coming in December.

Designed around an innovative unified thermal core, the Mac Pro features the latest Intel Xeon processors with up to 12 cores, dual workstation-class GPUs, six Thunderbolt 2 ports, PCIe-based flash storage and ultra-fast ECC memory. Packing amazing performance in a stunning new design, the all-new Mac Pro starts at £2,499 and will be available in December.

"The new Mac Pro is our vision for the future of the pro desktop, everything about it has been reimagined and there has never been anything like it", said Philip Schiller, Apples senior vice president of Worldwide Marketing. "The new Mac Pro packs up to 12-core Xeon CPUs, dual FirePro GPUs, ultra-fast ECC memory, new PCIe flash storage, Thunderbolt 2 expandability and more into a radical new design that is one-eighth the size of the previous generation Mac Pro."

"From the blazing fast performance of DaVinci Resolve to real-time video capture with UltraStudio 4K, Mac Pro is a revolution in pro desktop design and performance," said Grant Petty, CEO of Blackmagic Design.

With the Mac Pros dual workstation-class GPUs, weve seen MARI run five times faster, creating a fluid painting experience thats unlike anything weve seen. This kind of performance is a digital artists dream, said Bill Collis, CEO of The Foundry.

At 20Gbps, Mac Pros Thunderbolt 2 blows away anything on the market and completely changes the external storage landscape, said James Lee, CEO of PROMISE Technology.

The all-new Mac Pro is architected around a unified thermal core that allows the system to efficiently share thermal capacity across all the processors. An innovative fan draws in air incredibly efficiently and makes the new Mac Pro as quiet as a Mac mini. The result is a pro desktop with unprecedented performance packed into a design that is just 9.9-inches tall and one-eighth the volume of the previous Mac Pro.

Reinvented from the inside out, Mac Pro is designed to tackle even the most demanding workflows. The new Mac Pro features 4-core, 6-core, 8-core or 12-core Intel Xeon processors running at Turbo Boost speeds up to 3.9 GHz that deliver double the floating point performance of the previous generation Mac Pro. Two workstation-class AMD FirePro GPUs with up to 12GB of video memory provide up to seven teraflops of compute power and up to eight times the graphics performance of the previous generation Mac Pro.* OpenGL and OpenCL are optimized in OS X Mavericks to leverage the full computing power of the Mac Pro CPU and dual GPUs.

The new Mac Pro features PCIe-based flash storage that delivers sequential read speeds up to 1.2GBps and is up to 10 times faster than conventional desktop hard drives. ECC DDR3 running at 1866 MHz, with a four-channel memory controller, gives the new Mac Pro up to 60GBps of memory bandwidth, twice that of the previous generation Mac Pro.* The spectacular power and bandwidth of Mac Pro means you can seamlessly edit full-resolution 4K video streams and play them in real time.

Featuring an incredible six Thunderbolt 2 ports, each with up to 20Gbps of bandwidth per device, the all-new Mac Pro completely redefines desktop expandability. Thunderbolt 2 ports support up to six daisy-chained devices each, giving pros the ability to connect up to 36 high-performance peripheralsfrom external storage devices, to multiple PCI expansion chassis, to audio and video breakout boxes. Thunderbolt 2 uses existing copper or optical Thunderbolt cables and is completely backward compatible with existing Thunderbolt peripherals and cables, and also supports the latest 4K displays. A new self-configuring IP over Thunderbolt software feature in OS X Mavericks provides a fast link between Thunderbolt-enabled Macs.

The new Mac Pro provides unparalleled power for Apples professional apps, including Final Cut Pro X, Logic Pro X and Aperture. Final Cut Pro X has been optimized to support dual GPUs for improved real-time playback performance, faster rendering, quicker export, and 4K video monitoring through Thunderbolt 2 and HDMI. Flash storage makes importing and

exporting thousands of high-resolution images faster with Aperture. Logic Pro X takes advantage of flash storage for incredibly fast project load times and Thunderbolt 2 for a high number of channels of ultra-low latency audio I/O without the need for add-on PCI cards.

The new Mac Pro ships with OS X Mavericks. Mavericks is the 10th major release of the worlds most advanced operating system and is available for free from the Mac App Store. In addition to more than 200 new features, Mavericks introduces features for power users including Finder Tabs, Tags and enhanced multi-display support, as well as new core technologies for breakthrough performance such as Compressed Memory to keep your Mac fast and responsive. Mavericks also delivers significant performance enhancements for systems with dual GPUs through optimised OpenGL and OpenCL. For more information or to download Mavericks visit www.apple.com/osx/.

Mac Pro meets stringent Energy Star 6.0 requirements and achieves an EPEAT Gold rating.** Mac Pro uses up to 70 percent less energy than the previous generation, is constructed with 79 percent less aluminium and uses 80 percent less packaging material than the current Mac Pro. Mac Pro contains no brominated flame retardants, is PVC-free and uses highly recyclable materials and features material-efficient system and packaging designs.

Fantastic Short Movie, Red Giant Films Presents: Run Like Hell, directed by Stu Maschwitz
The film is shot POV-style, with a GoPro camera, which can be found in many sporting goods and retail stores for just $299. Off-the-shelf software was also a critical part of the production. On Set, Stu used Red Giant BulletProof to review and backup his footage. The film is directed by acclaimed visual effects master, Stu Maschwitz

Red Giant has announced the release of RUN LIKE HELL – a new short film inspired by the cult classic video game, from Interplay software. The film is directed by acclaimed visual effects master, Stu Maschwitz (Star Wars, Sin City) who is attached to direct the feature screenplay. Stu is also Red Giants Creative Director and has designed many of Red Giants tools for filmmakers.

Stu wanted to tease some of RUN LIKE HELL'S story and visual effects, while doing it on a very tight budget, so he used tools accessible to almost any filmmaker and visual effects artist. The film is shot POV-style, with a GoPro camera, which can be found in many sporting goods and retail stores for just $299.

"The GoPro camera was critical in telling the story," said executive producer Aharon Rabinowitz. "Stu wanted the audience to see what the main character misses – clues about the story, at the very edge of his field of view. The picture quality along with the GoPro's signature wide-angle look made that possible." Early in pre-production, Maschwitz came up with a workflow that greatly simplified the process of adding believable visual effects into the wide angle GoPro footage. Once he had the process locked down, he knew he was ready to shoot.

Off-the-shelf software was also a critical part of the production. On Set, Stu used Red Giant BulletProof to review and backup his footage. "BulletProof saved me a few times during the shoot," said Maschwitz, who is also the brains behind the software. "At one point, I thought I was on my last take for a shot, but it turned out, on review, that I didn't get what I needed. I was able to go back immediately and re-shoot, without loosing my light."

Adobe After Effects and Premiere CC were used extensively along with Red Giant's Color Suite for color correction and Trapcode & Effects Suite for visual effects. Other inexpensive plug-ins were used as well.

"We're really proud to help a guy as talented as Stu show the world who he is as a director," said Rabinowitz. "Yeah, we're a company that makes software for filmmakers and VFX artists, but we make that software because we love making films. Our products are born out of the challenges we come up against in that process. Who knows New tools might come out of this film too.

RUN LIKE HELL is Red Giant's 6th film. You can see all of the Red Giant films at http://redgiant.com/films.

NEW TOM HANK'S BLOCKBUSTER MOVIE GRADED WITH DAVINCI RESOLVE

Blackmagic Design has announced that Company 3 London has used DaVinci Resolve for color grading the film adaptation of Captain Phillips, the latest blockbuster film starring Tom Hanks.

Four years after it made headlines, the harrowing true life story of American shipping captain Richard Phillips, swept up in a hostage ordeal after Somali pirates hijacked his ship, has been made into a new film by director Paul Greengrass, with Barry Akroyd as the cinematographer. Color correction for Captain Phillips was carried out by Company 3s senior colorist Rob Pizzey.

Barry has a naturalistic style of shooting and Captain Phillips was no different, explains Pizzey. Everything is filmed handheld, so you never have any locked off shots during the film. Because of that, Barry is right on top of the action. You almost feel like a part of the film.

The challenge during this grade was the films climax, which takes place at night. Most of the climax was actually shot during the day so we had a big job on our hands matching those shots, which were filmed on a variety of formats, with the night footage.

A month before the DI, Akroyd and Pizzey had the chance to work on the conformed day for night scenes, allowing them to start setting the look.

We worked through the scenes making sure that we could achieve what we wanted and flagged areas where we could do with some help from VFX. DaVinci Resolves unlimited nodes and auto tracking capabilities were a big help during Captain Philips big day for night scenes, said Pizzey.

The camera is always moving because youre at sea, so the tracking tool was perfect because I could hand draw shapes and then grade within that area. Resolves auto tracking would then map to the movement of the camera so we could get on with matching all of the footage. It was also really useful for lining up faces and pulling out eyes. With the auto tracking, you get the shape on there and it maps it all the way through. It really did save me a lot of time.

Having got it in a pretty good place, we then rendered out the DPX files with the grade baked on and sent them over to the visual effects house, who were able to help us in areas where Id darkened bits down to help sell the look.

When those shots came back into the timeline for the main DI they were 90 per cent final. The main DI was attended by Barry for the first seven days, during which time the pair set the look and mood and graded the climax of the film in full.
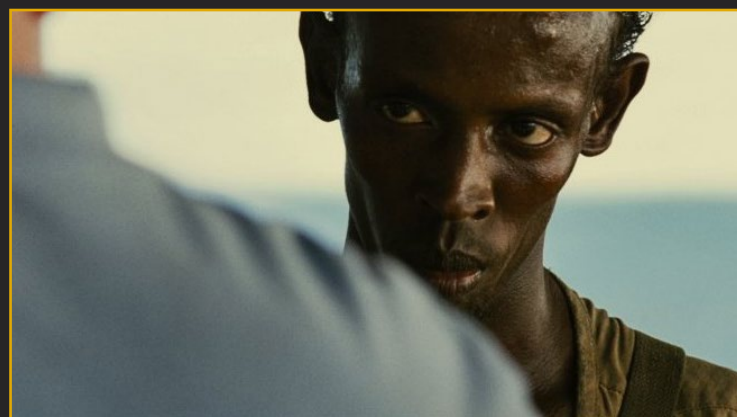
LAST BURST OF SUMMER - CLOSE UP PHOTOGRAPHY WITH THE BLACKMAGIC CINEMA CAMERA.

Sometimes you don't need to step any further than your garden to achieve spectacular results. A sunny day in the UK, just before winter arrives, I notice a lot of wildlife in the garden. Bugs are busy, collecting pollen and buzzing about. A perfect opportunity for some close up filming. I grab the latest addition to my lens collection, the Nikon 70-180mm Macro lens.

Close up photography is an area I've always had a passion for.

In my early twenties I dreamed of owning the Canon EF 100mm Macro. This was regarded as the lens for close up work. For me it too much money to purchase. So I bought a set of Hoya 52mm close up lenses which I used with my Canon EOS film camera, shooting still images. Using the close up lenses I was able to achieve some fantastic results.

20 some years later I did buy the Canon EF 100mm Macro, a true macro lens, including stabilization, super quick auto-focus, razor sharp with tremendous possibilities for shallow depth of field. This is one of the great lenses. However, it isn't particularly easy to use, certainly if you're shooting moving images; the lens was designed for still photography. Regardless, in the right hands this lens can produce beautiful results.

My passion for close up work recently took a new turn when I purchased a Nikon lens, discontinued some 10 years ago, which is absolutely staggering in its photographic abilities.

Read up on this lens, the Nikon 70-180mm Macro at http://tinyurl.com/zublb

This lens is unique in that it is the world's only variable focal macro zoom lens. That means you can focus within a few inches of your subject, anywhere within the range of 70-180mm. You don't need to move the camera to reframe, which is what needs to be done with a fixed focal length macro lens.

Check out the movie above. This was filmed with the Nikon 70-180mm using the Blackmagic Cinema Camera (EF). The 2.3 crop factor makes this lens the equivalent of 161-414mm in 35mm still photography terms. That's a pretty long reach for a macro lens. Note: the footage was shot RAW and exported as ProRes before editing in FCPX. The shots are ungraded.

The Nikon 70-180mm macro lens is one of a kind, and only available by searching far and wide for places selling the lens used. Discontinued in 2004, this lens doesnt come cheap. It is certainly one of a kind.
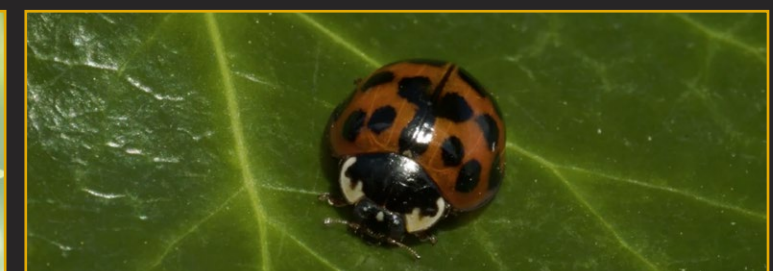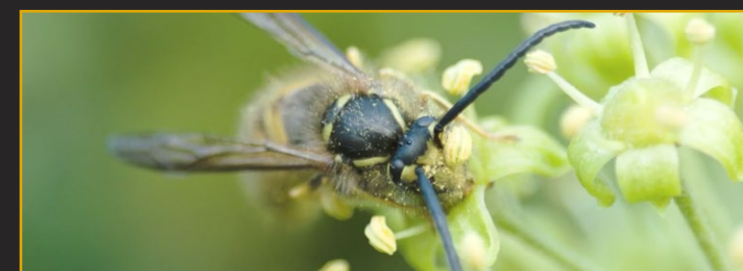
NEWS IN BRIEF...

## APPLE ANNOUNCES IPAD AIRDRAMATICALLY THINNER, LIGHTER & MORE POWERFUL IPAD

Apple has announced iPad Air, the latest generation of its category defining device, featuring a stunning 9.7-inch Retina display in a new thinner and lighter design. Precision-engineered to weigh just one pound, iPad Air is 20 percent thinner and 28 percent lighter than the fourth generation iPad, and with a narrower bezel the borders of iPad Air are dramatically thinnermaking content even more immersive.

READ THE FULL STORY >

MACBOOK PRO WITH RETINA DISPLAY UPDATED WITH LATEST PROCESSORS, FASTER GRAPHICS & LONGER BATTERY LIFE

The updated MacBook Pro with Retina display features a stunning high-resolution display, an amazing thin and light design, and the latest technology to power through the most demanding projects. Apple today also announced that both iWork and iLife are now free with the purchase of every new Mac.
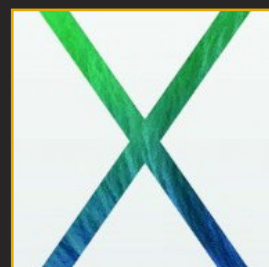
READ THE FULL STORY >

OS X MAVERICKS AVAILABLE NOW AVAILABLE FREE FROM THE MAC APP STORE

Apple today announced that OS X Mavericks, the 10th major release of the worlds most advanced desktop operating system, is available for free from the Mac App Store. With more than 200 new features, OS X Mavericks brings iBooks and Maps to the Mac, includes a new version of Safari, enhances multi-display support, introduces Finder Tabs and Tags and delivers new core technologies for breakthrough power efficiency and performance.

READ THE FULL STORY >

## APPLE INTRODUCES NEXT GENERATION IWORK & ILIFE APPS FOR OS X & IOS

iWork & iLife Now Free With Every New Mac & iOS Device. This is the biggest day for apps in Apples history, said Eddy Cue, Apples senior vice president of Internet Software and Services. These new versions deliver seamless experiences across devices that you cant find anywhere else and are packed with great features like iMovie Theater, Drummer and a new unified file format for iWork documents across all your devices.

READ THE FULL STORY >

AVID ANNOUNCES PRO TOOLS 11 COMPATIBILITY FOR COMPLETE EASTWEST CATALOG OF AWARD-WINNING INSTRUMENTS

More than 30 EASTWEST/Quantum Leap award-winning collections are now Pro Tools 11 compatible, including EASTWESTs famous Hollywood series. Avid Pro Tools 11 redefines professional music and audio production for todays workflows.
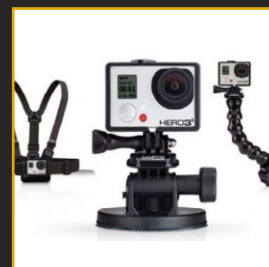
READ THE FULL STORY >

GOPRO LAUNCHES SMALLER, LIGHTER EVOLUTION OF BEST SELLING HERO CAMERA

The new HERO3+ line of cameras is 20% smaller and lighter and 30% better battery life; also featuring an improved lens, GoPro also announced several new mounting accessories. The HERO3+ line of cameras and accessories are now available.

READ THE FULL STORY >

TELESTREAM RELEASES NEW PRODUCTS WITH VANTAGE 6

Post Producer automates content assembly and TrafficManager simplifies ad workflow management; new media analysis capabilities and more post-production formats are now available in Vantage

READ THE FULL STORY >

IANIRO LAUNCHES THE GULLIVER LED TRAVEL LIGHT

Ianiro's new portable and fully dimmable Gulliver LED is a small 40W unit available in AC or DC versions. With the same diminutive proportions as the classic halogen light, the new Gulliver offers all the advantages of LED technology.
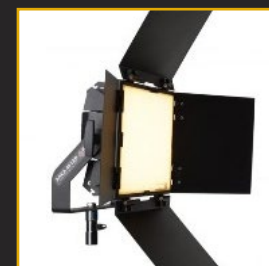
READ THE FULL STORY >

PROKIT INTRODUCES AREA 48 REMOTE PHOSPHOR LED SOFTLIGHT

The Area 48 compact soft source is strong but low weight, and measures only 365mm x 275mm overall. It delivers a high light output comparable to a 1K traditional tungsten soft light. Importantly the remote phosphor technology employed sets it apart from most other designs, enabling a CRI reading of up to 97

READ THE FULL STORY >

RON HOWARD'S LATEST FILM GRADED ON DAVINCI RESOLVE

The overall goal during the grade was to create a look that would bind both digital and archived film material together, giving Rush a seamless look throughout. Our brief was to give the film a 70s period feel with a modern slant. Inspiration for the colour palette came from a lot of the readily available archived 8mm, 16mm and 35mm footage of the 1976 World Championship.

READ THE FULL STORY >

This is the ARRI Amira, the new documentary-style camera. It combines the Alexa image quality with a single-operator shoulder mount ergonomics. It also includes in-camera grading where it can load 3D LUTs from grading systems or modify the parameters in camera, and it also features the very well-known ARRI product quality which users know from Alexa and other products.

In terms of technical details, Amira has the Alexa sensor, it has the next rendition of the Alexa sensor. It includes all the benefits you get with the Alexa sensor, 14 plus stops of dynamic range, sudden highlight handling, exceptional skin tones, natural colour rendering, and the ability to record from 0.75 frames per second up to 200 frames per second, so through the whole range up to 200 frames, same image quality, no restrictions, no limitations.
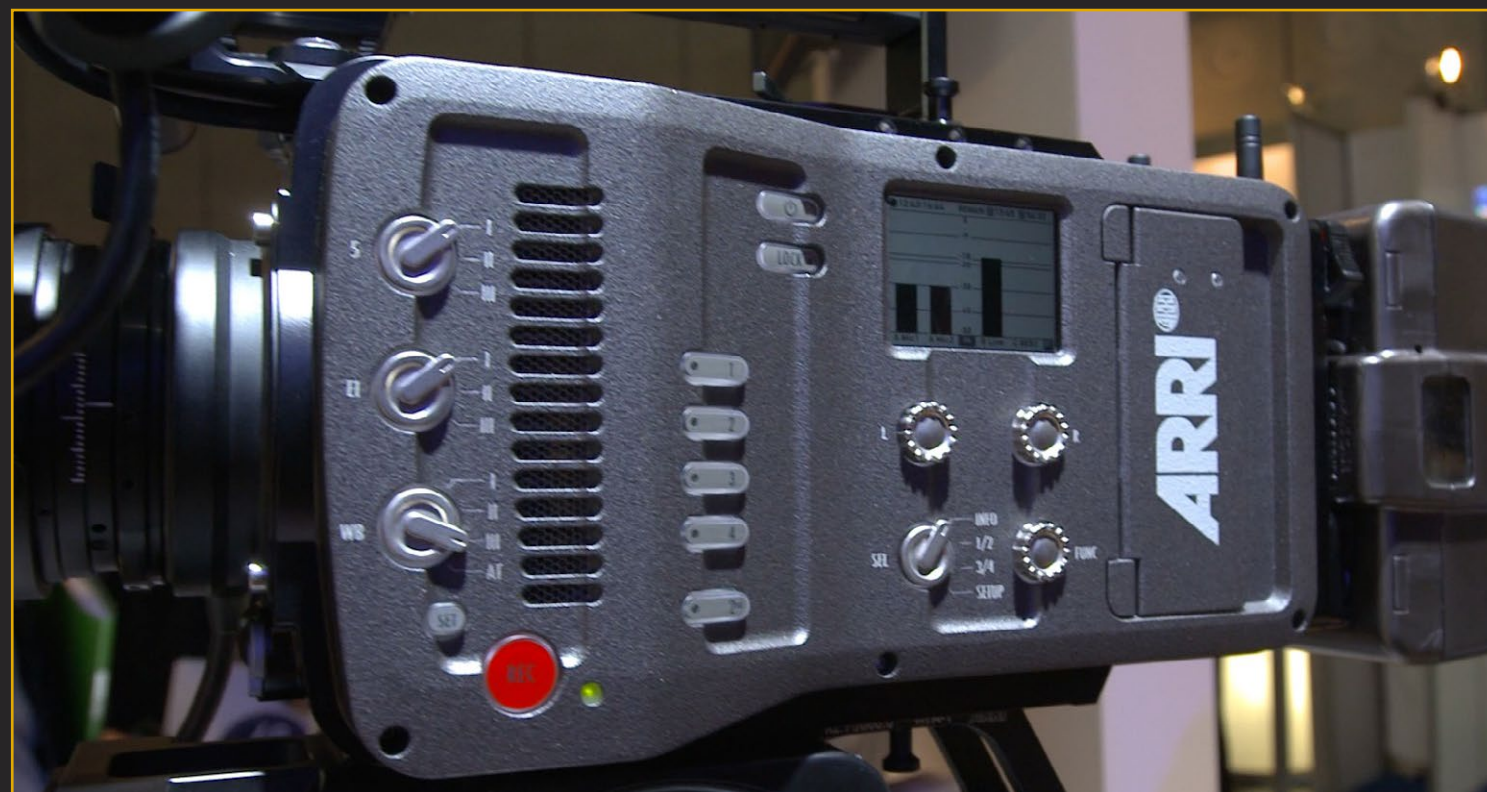
This is very different to the Alexa, which is much more a two-operation camera, and this is a single-operation camera. A couple of components make Amira ideal for single-user operation: first, the view finder, because it's a multi-view-finder. It includes an OLED eyepiece, 1280x1020 for resolution, and combines that with a foldaway LCD display. They can fold it over and that serves, not only as a live-view but it can also switch that to control the camera. You have all the camera settings here in that display, so you control the camera through that display.
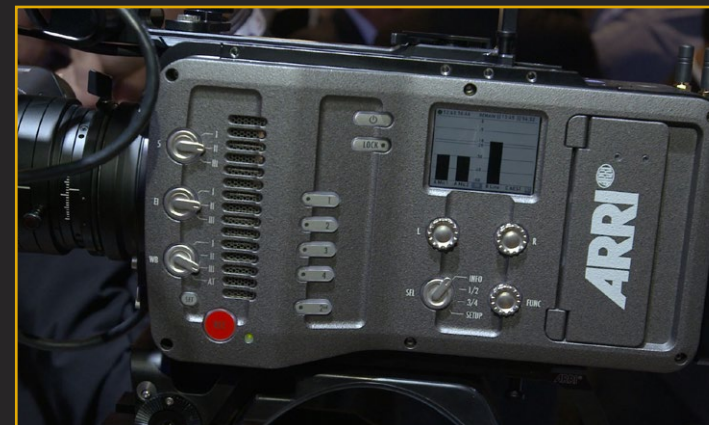
Also important for documentary-style shooting, you need audio in the camera, so we have complete audio functionality, four channels recording and four inputs. Amira has all input formats like microphone in, phantom power, line in, digital audio in, and last but not least, for shorter operation, you can bring the camera to the balance point with dovetails adjustments on top and bottom of the camera. You can bring the shoulder-pad just to the balance point so that the camera sits at the balance point on your shoulder, you can do the same for your viewfinder. So you bring it perfectly on your shoulder.

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If you have a feature film production which doesn't need advanced crew functionality or which has focus for more shoulder operation, then it's also a camera you could use for this type of production; be aware it does not do 4:3, it does not do ARRI RAW, it does not do anamorphic desqueeze, it doesn't have any plus functionality like the Alexa Plus for the lens control system; those are not included. If you can live without that, you can shoot of course any kind of production you want to shoot.

It's a ProRes camera. It does all flavours of ProRes up to 444 and all speeds from 1 to 200 frames per second. It's the ARRI Amira, it's also not a successor to Alexa, it's a companion to Alexa for documentary-style shooting.

Speaking to Marc-André Ferguson and Maurice Patel. Guys, less than a year since Smoke 2013 has actually been available. I know it was out in beta before, but we're talking the shipping release. Tell me what's been going on in this time and the latest developments, and what the key things about Smoke is for film makers looking to get into this technology, that don't know about it already.

Marc-André: We've been pretty active on the development side. We had two service packs released after the release in December, and the extension release, which has a whole bunch of new features and added bonuses and performance-enhancements, that came out in May. So that's three big releases for Smoke ever since it was released a mere nine months ago.

Rick: And tell us a bit about the releases. What were the features that were added?

Marc-André: The two biggest features in the extension release were these. We started supporting Blackmagic hardware – that was the number one most requested feature of our users; they wanted Blackmagic hardware, they probably already had Blackmagic hardware and they wanted to be able to use it for monitoring and IO in Smoke, so were really proud to add that. We also wrapped up I guess the whole editing story in Smoke 2013 by adding a really robust trim view. So you can do dynamic trimming, you can do dynamic trimming in the timeline, we added a dedicated trim tool, which is something that Smoke has never had, so selection and trim are now separate, so a lot of editors like to do it that way, so add your rollers in the timeline, do some AB rolling, so just like you'd expect in an NLE. That sort of closes a chapter on this and lets us start working on architecture and the FX which we started doing in the extension by releasing something called the fling reactor, which is the architecture – a full 16-bit flow architecture for ConnectFX. So everything that you do now in ConnectFX is all 16-bit float, everything gets bumped up to that. It's really, really fast, really robust and really high quality, which is the key features in Smoke. You always want to work in the highest quality possible. So any kind of rendering and processing that takes place while you're working is all in 16-bit flow.

Maurice: I think another really exciting thing that's happened is the publishing of a new book called Smoke Essentials, so it's a training tutorial book. What's really interesting about it as a project, it's a project by Alexis Van Hurkman and what he did was he basically did his own independent production, a short science-fiction movie that he created, and he documented this process, and he's actually using that as the foundation for the book. So it's not some dry, sterile, 'Do this, this in Smoke'. It's actually a book based on a real production, an independent production of a short science-fiction movie, integrating lots of visual effects, and I think that's why people have been really excited about Smoke: it's the ability to do all this creative work and this includes integrating CG, doing visual effects, doing that, and being able to do that with a small team or in a small budget or as an independent. I think those are the things which are really interesting in terms of how customers are using smoke and the paces they're putting the product through.
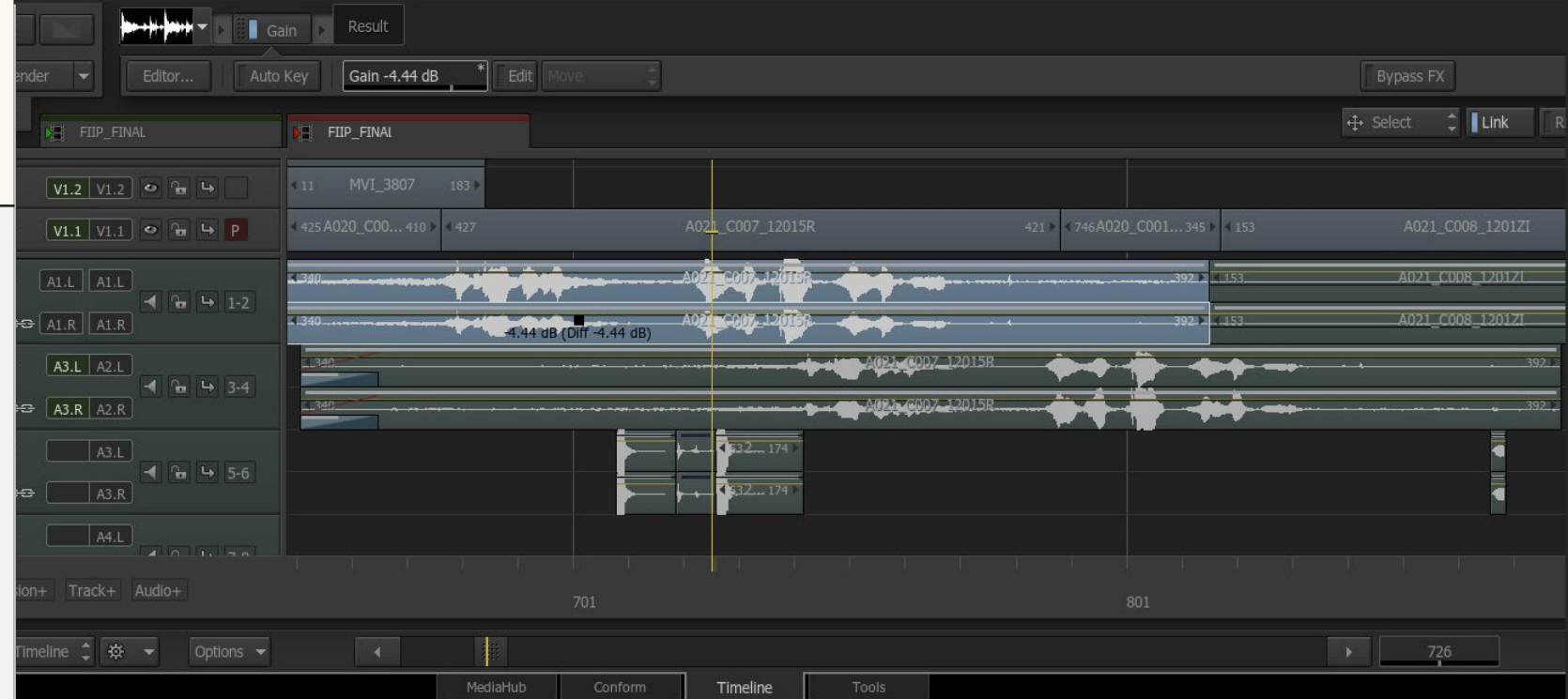
Marc-André Ferguson - Editing and Effects Evangelist for Smoke

Maurice Patel - Entertainment Industry Manager, Autodesk

Alexis Van Hurkman

AUTODESK Official Press

Autodesk® Smoke® ESSENTIALS

AUTODESK® SMOKE®

"IT'S A STORY-TELLING SYSTEM"

Rick: Something I find really exciting about the whole Smoke thing, and it's what you just said, that you can do it as an independent on a small budget these days. It was never like that, you could never get this level of visual effects, combined with everything else, the editing capabilities and all the other facilities such as Connect FX and things you've got in Smoke, you couldn't do it before, 'cause it was just too expensive; we had to go to facilities companies. So just give us a bit of a background as to where Smoke has been before and where it's come to now, 'cause it's not just that the price has come down, but the usability is a lot more for people that are not total techno-heads. It's not so difficult. Am I correct with all that?

Marc-André: You're correct. One of the key points around Smoke 2013's complete UI architecture was to make it more accessible to non-linear editors who have come from a Final Cut Pro background, who come from a Media Composer background, or even Premier, to be able to jump into Smoke and understand the way that the timeline works and the way that the editing works like that <snaps fingers> so you could get access to its powerful FX tools faster. So not only can you conform timelines from other NLEs, you can also cut directly in there. So Smoke has always had a timeline – it's funny, one of the comments we heard last year when 2013 was released is, 'Hey, there's a timeline in Smoke!' Well there's always been a timeline in Smoke; it's just that it was different. So we just made it more streamlined and more user-friendly for people in the professional video market to be able to give them access to our FX tools. And that's really the main point, the main reason to work with Smoke, is to be able to have access to our FX capabilities, which is our history at Autodesk.
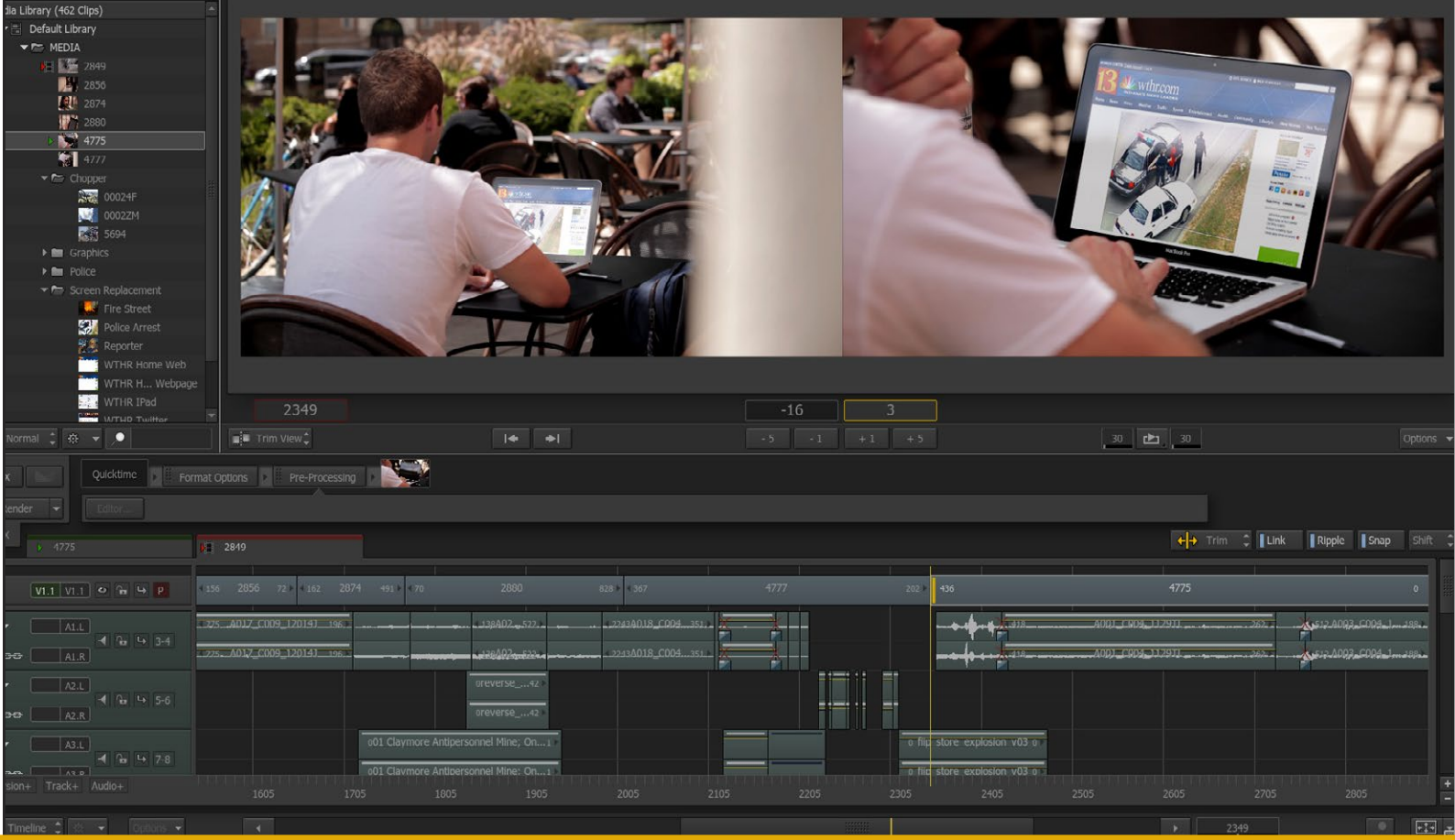
Maurice: And I think that's where our expertise has long been, obviously. We've been in online finishing, Conform, VisualFX, for decades, and we developed some very sophisticated tools, whether it's keying tools, tracking tools, colour correction tools, those tools are very sophisticated, developed very high-quality results, and very efficiently, and I think those are the two things; yes, you could do some

of this work before but it would take a lot of trial and error, whereas these tools have been fine-tuned to a great degree to allow people to pull complex keys quickly, easily, more efficiently and to a high-quality result, and as Marc-André was explaining about the 16-bit architecture, these things I think go a long way to making sure that you can do these effects to a high-quality standard.

Rick: And how do you describe Smoke these days? Is it a finishing system, is it a combination editing system, has the perception changed, because, with the many interviews we've done over the years, and we've talked about this in depth, I always thought of it as a finishing system with editing capabilities. Is it still that, or is it more a combination of editor/finishing system?

Maurice: It's a story-telling system I think. Finishing is a word that's popular but I don't really like that term, especially in conjunction with Smoke, 'cause I think Smoke is about helping you tell stories better, and yes it is ... you can begin in Final Cut and you take it to Smoke and you can finish it in that sense, or you can even begin in Smoke and do your work there, but really what it's about is helping you tell your story, get what's in your head, out. And because of the technology for taking what might in your dreams and in your imagination and getting it onto a digital format is so powerful today, this is where the FX capabilities come in. It allows you to do things in very creative ways, to explore things that you might never have thought possible before, or you might have thought cost-prohibitive. And nowadays, you can do things in very different ways, you can find collaborators around the world to work on projects with you much more easily through social media. It's really, really fascinating, watching how independents work today in terms of how they pool into resources, whether it's finding funding from Kickstarter or whether it's working with people in... like someone Chicago might be working
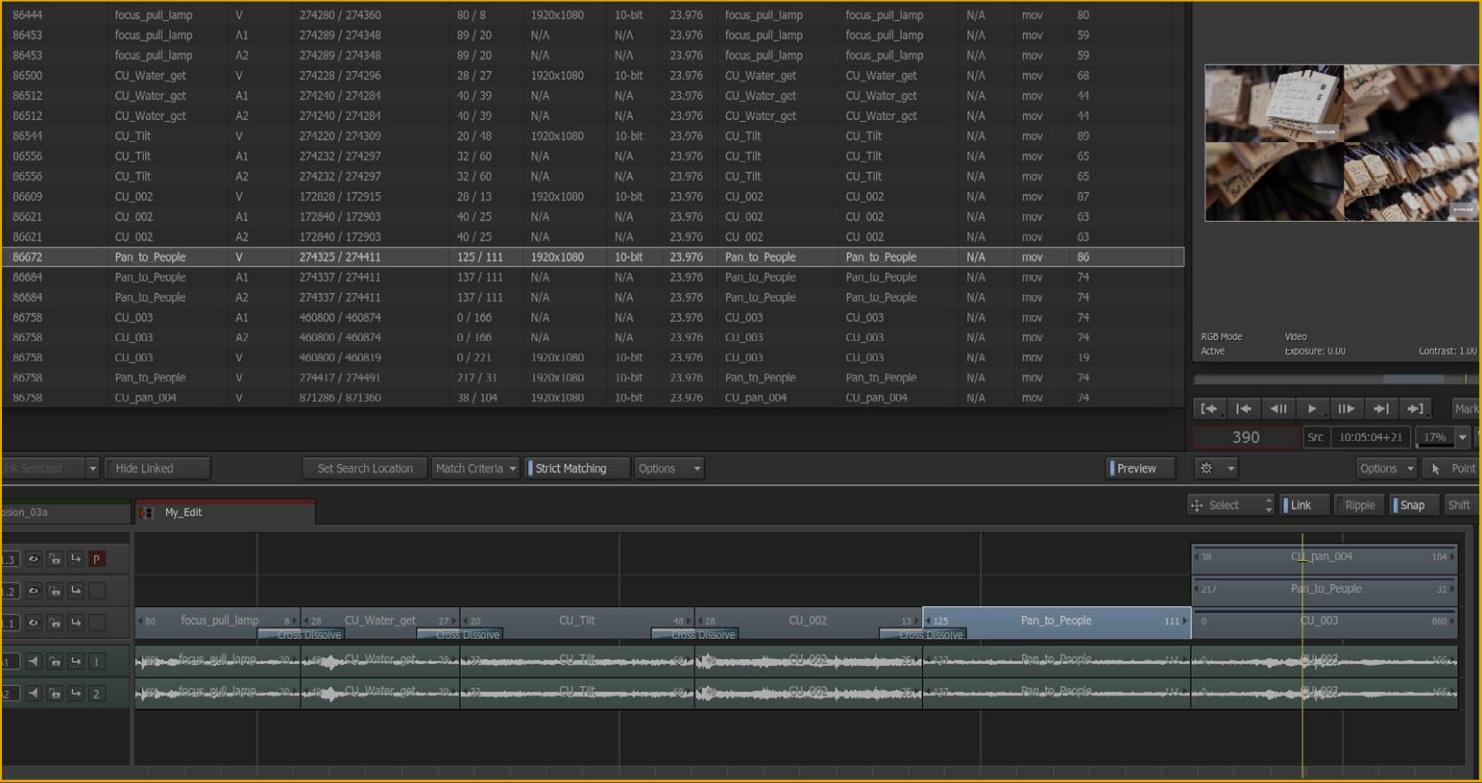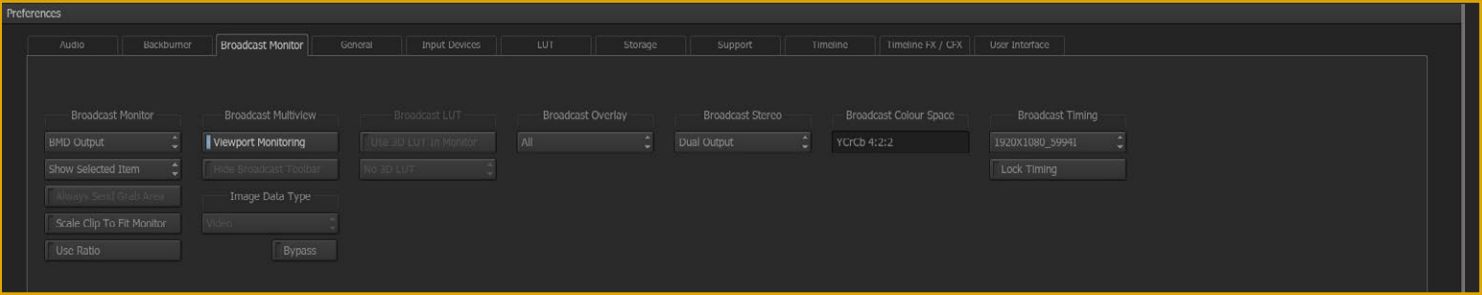
of Smoke and think, 'That's great but I don't know that I could do that,' is it difficult to learn, is it an intense application, or is it spend a bit of time and you'll find your way through 'cause it's not that difficult, especially now that its been a lot more streamlined?

Marc-André: It's been more streamlined. I'd say it's easier to learn. Smoke is still a powerful application so it takes some time investment to be able to learn it, to master it, so I'll be totally honest and say it's not something that you take up lightly, it's something that you really want to invest yourself in, because it does encompass such a wide array of tools that you have to learn, or you want to be able to learn every single facet of Smoke, to be able to master its capabilities. So that takes some time investment, but the fact that we have now more training than we've ever had before, we've got 7 or 8 training providers, Alexis's book, which is a getting started manual, it's never been easier to learn Smoke than before.

Maurice: And you won't really get the benefit of the software unless you want to invest the time in doing so. I mean ultimately it's anything that you want to become a master of the craft, you need to invest time in developing that mastery, and I think the great thing is though, if you do master the craft you can do amazing things, and therefore from our point of view it is definitely worth it, and we see that a lot from the people who have really embraced the technology.

Marc-André: I've been using it almost exclusively to do the productions that I do at the office, so for example I produce a show called Smoke Signals, which is news and information about Smoke, and I cut everything in Smoke, so it's become my de facto tool to do all my editing, because I want to start adding effects as fast as possible. So when I'm doing tricks, it's fun to be able to have access to these tools. And I also like Final Cut Pro 10 now, which is different … probably a different answer from last year, and we've got one of the best Final Cut Pro 10 integrations out there.

So now it's down to what are your ideas, and how do you want to give them light?

with someone in London and someone in Abu Dhabi and they might be working and say, 'Hey, this is a good 3ds Max guy, I saw some work of his on CG Society and I really liked that so I dropped him an email and …' You know, it's this kind of creativity and productivity is really interesting. And I think that was what was interesting about what Alexis Van Hurkman did with his work; that's exactly how he put this together. It wasn't a group of people working together for a company; it was a group of people around the world who got together to do this project 'cause they thought it was a cool idea.

Rick: Tell us, for the people that don't know, the capabilities of Smoke. Where are the absolute strengths in the system. What can Smoke do exceptionally well, maybe better than other systems out there; I'm not asking you to be specific about other systems, but tell me what's so good about Smoke that makes it absolutely unique.

Marc-André: Smoke is the only software of its kind to have a full 3D compositing engine. So we're not talking about 2.5D, it's a full 3D environment where you can composit your 2D images, 3D images, in stereo I mean. You can also import 3D objects, you can make 3D text and have everything live in 3D. You can wrap video around an object if you want. So it's really something that's unique to Smoke and a lot of people, when I tell them about this feature, they say, 'Well I don't do 3D. I don't know why I'd use that.' So then I like to show a trick that we call relighting, where you can just by bending an image a little bit you can actually add light to a scene that wasn't there before, because you are working in a true 3D environment so you start adding lights to basically relight the scene. So if you think you've got a corner that's way too bright, you can sort of lower the brightness a bit by just adding a spotlight in the corner, and by feathering the edge of it, so it's really a nice feature that lets you use the power of a 3D compositing a very flat image.

Also the keying tools are some of my favourite tools in Smoke. They're really, really fast, they're really efficient, and you basically just draw on the green-screen to remove where it is. It's really, really powerful, and when you get into a very tough situation when you've got a green-screen that's several colours or you've got something where you've got a woman with hair blowing in the wind and she's got really soft edges around her hair, but she's got hard edges around her coat or her clothes, you can have multiple passes as a key, with something we call the modular keyer. So it's really a get out of jail free card, 'cause you've got all of these tools to fix most of the post-production problems that you'll have day-to-day. It's something as simple as removing a licence-plate, something as complicated as compositing people in front of dragons or fire or whatever.

And to inspire people, especially indie film makers, Maurice was talking about Alexis's project; what we've been doing a lot this year is promoting projects that were done from A-Z in Smoke, like Fix It in Post, Jeremy Hunt's movie that we showed at NAB, and Alexis Hurkman's film, The Place Where You Live, which people will be able to work with once his book is released. So they'll have access to all of these files, and be able to actually redo the scenes from his film.

Rick: Brilliant. Now, for those that look at the capabilities

UNTIL THE NEXT TIME...

DIGITAL CINEMA NIGHT, DEC. 4, LEICESTER SQUARE AT THE PRINCE CHARLES CINEMA, LONDON

See footage on the big screen from the following cameras: Blackmagic Cinema Camera, Blackmagic Pocket Camera, Sony F3, Sony F5, RED Epic, big sensor Canon cameras (more to be announced soon).

It has long been a dream of mine to see my work on the big screen, and also, to prove to myself just what is cinema quality.

There's all sorts of opinions out there from bloggers to sales people about the equipment needed to shoot for different situations. If you shoot for broadcast you shoot 4:2:2, if you shoot for cinema you shoot 2K or 4K; shoot for the web pick up whatever camera you want.

However, it isn't as simple as that. These hard lines of distinction do not always apply. "Life of Pi", a beautiful visual spectacle was shot in HD at 1920x1080, and no one would argue that this movie isn't first class in terms of visual quality. Is 1920 x 1080 suitable for cinema projection, that is a burning question in my mind.

2K is 2048 x 1080 native resolution
HD is 1920 x 1080 native resolution

In terms of resolution 2K contains only 6.25% more information that HD. And the format is cropped slightly differently. Does it matter?

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Media Production -
Dreamshock Design
Copy Editor - Fiona Young

THERE ARE QUESTIONS I WANT ANSWERS TO...

So I've booked a cinema, right in the heart of London, bang in the middle of Leicester Square, so a whole range of footage can be screened.

This is what is confirmed to be shown on the night of December 4 on the big screen, footage from the following cameras: Blackmagic Cinema Camera, Blackmagic Pocket Camera, Sony PMW-F3, Sony PMW-F5, RED Epic, Canon 5D Mark III. This list will be updated very soon.

In addition to showing footage from many different cameras, Movie Machine will also feature the 10 best film submissions for the night.

This is a combination digital cinema evening with digital cinema festival competition. Submit a film between 1 and 5 minutes, the 10 best films will be shown on the big screen at the Prince Charles Cinema in Leicester Square. And the 1st prize for the winner of the festival is a Blackmagic Cinema Camera, courtesy of Holdan.

I'm excited about this event. The opportunity to screen footage from as many different cameras, on the big screen, in a real cinema, is something which doesn't come along too often. This is a unique chance for you to see the results on the big screen and decide for yourself what is cinema quality.

http://www.moviemachine.tv/digital-cinema-festival/

Until the next time,
Rick