

# 8mm Productions changes filmmaking in India with the SCRATCH-RED 4K Workflow

8mm Productions is a production and post production company with its roots firmly grounded in the heart of Bollywood. Two years ago, 8mm ventured into the then unknown world of digital 4K cinema, unaware this would catapult them to the forefront of the new digital imaging revolution, destined to change filmmaking for independent and studio filmmakers in India. ASSIMILATE's SCRATCH® Digital Process Solution is the data pipeline that completes their 4K workflow.

**Projects** David Premier, 8mm Productions: "Many of our clients -- MTV, Channel V, Nirvana Films, Black Magic Productions, Fingerprint Productions, to name a few - have all shot with our RED ONE 4K Cameras and are extremely pleased with the final output from SCRATCH. A few of our projects include commercials for Piaggio Ape Truk, Radio Mirchi, and Shaadi.com. We've also done documentaries and corporate films for Reliance Industries Limited and several diamond manufacturers/exporters in India. Our list of 4K (SCRATCH/RED) films includes Director Nikhil Sinha's *Alla Udhla* (Saga Arts); Director Siddharth Anand Kumar's *Semshook*, with Cinematographer Pankaj Kumar (Elephant Films); Director Aditya Sengupta's Channel V Promo, with Cinematographer: Saurabh Vishwakarma."

For six years, 8mm Productions had been making documentaries and commercials utilizing the industry's traditional technology and tools, and playing by the norms. In 2007, they contemplated owning their own equipment to capture their films and learned of the hottest, bleeding-edge

digital camera technology – the RED ONE™ Digital 4K Camera. A lot of hype preceded the announcement and delivery of the RED camera, but it had strong backing by Jim Jannard (Oakley fame) and his army of ardent and very skilled followers. With the prerequisite research and many cigarettes later, Ajit Gupta, David Premier, Manish Hamza and the other folks at 8mm decided to join the RED camera following. As the first company to purchase a RED ONE 4K camera in Mumbai, India they knew from the onset that the task before them was nothing short of herculean.

"We're talking about a giant leap into a digital revolution that seemed incredibly daunting," says Gupta. "Bollywood has long been content to follow the conventional ways of shooting and processing various film formats. It seemed any new technology was negated by traditional methodologies that were known and comfortable. So naturally, RED had its fair share of skeptics, and while it still does, there are now many enlightened users of the 4K digital cinema technology, worldwide."

Mithun D'Souza, a RED and SCRATCH expert at Benchmark Microsystems in Mumbai, notes, "Everyone can learn from the example set by visionary filmmaker Steven Soderbergh, who has embraced both RED for shooting and SCRATCH for post production/DI. Soderbergh's highly acclaimed 'Che' was shot with the RED camera and SCRATCH was used as the full post-production pipeline, including conform, construct, color grading, dailies, through to finishing. He's been an inspiration for me. As a reseller of SCRATCH, it's a very exciting time to



Top: "Alla Udhla" REDCODE RAW file; Bottom: final file after post production in SCRATCH. Images courtesy of 8mm Productions, Mumbai, India

## Credits

**Film** *Alla Udhla* **Producer** Saga Arts **Director** Nikhil Sinha **DP** Nikhil Sinha **Camera** RED ONE™ Digital 4K Camera **Post Production** SCRATCH® Digital Process Solution

be a part of the digital cinema revolution in India, working closely with the RED and ASSIMILATE teams to deliver cost-effective and high-quality tools to our filmmakers.

### New Business Model for 8mm Productions

8mm realized the RED footage needed a real-time data pipeline of software tools geared to handle the RED 4K digital files. So, the next logical step was to build an entire data pipeline, from off-line to finishing. A clear choice for editing at the off-line stage was Final Cut Pro, hooked up to a Promise Raid 12TB Storage and LTO Drives to back-up and archive all the footage. For the digital intermediate – conform, color grading, edit/reviews, dailies, through to finish – 8mm chose ASSIMILATE's SCRATCH Digital Process Solution for its rich feature set, agility, and speed in handling the native REDCODE RAW files. SCRATCH runs on a customized Globalstor workstation.

Premier states, "SCRATCH gives us a real-time data workflow that can handle a variety of formats, in and out. This was a totally new experience for us. We had no idea this was possible and it's proved invaluable in our day-to-day post production operations. We had a demo with the Benchmark Microsystems (SCRATCH reseller), and quickly realized its power, depth of functionality, and ease of use. We've also had great training and support from Mithun D'Souza at Benchmark, which has given us the confidence to utilize the full capabilities of SCRATCH." Gupta added, "We initially wanted to use the RED 4K cameras for only our own film productions, but realized renting the cameras when not in use could also strengthen our new business model."

### SCRATCH-RED 4K Data Workflow

ASSIMILATE partnered early on with RED Digital Cinema as one of the two companies – the other being Apple – to have access to the REDCODE node, the heart and soul of the digital imagery produced by the RED ONE camera. ASSIMILATE's SCRATCH is a full data workflow suite that gives post artists powerful, easy-to-use, resolution-independent tools for conform, construct, color grading, dailies, and finishing, not only for R3D files, but for a variety of formats from 35mm, 16mm, HD, SD, 2K, to 4K.

"For 8mm, SCRATCH obviously made a lot of sense because it was the only software that could handle the 4K media directly from the RED ONE camera without any painstaking conversions," says Hamza. "RED and SCRATCH open up a whole new world of filmmaking to a broader spectrum of filmmakers and post teams. At first glance, it seems like a drastic change in tried and true methodology, but the proven high quality results at incredible price/performance outweigh any presumption of risk."

D'Souza notes, "Skepticism was the first reaction to a SCRATCH-RED 4K Data Workflow within the Bollywood community, but patience worked for us. We were able to prove to the industry experts how easy it is to use the RED cameras, edit on the FCP with QuickTime proxies, use the EDLs, and then on SCRATCH, do the conform and color grading, get the DPX files out, do the finishing, and then create a variety of deliverables in different formats. The time and cost savings alone, for example, bypassing lab time and doing edit/review in real time – are profound; and then consider the high quality results, and the SCRATCH-RED process is

downright amazing."

Gupta adds, "Today we own two RED cameras for production and for our post production facility, SCRATCH is the heart of our digital pipeline. A few years ago, this kind of a set up would only have been wishful thinking. But thanks to the visionary thinking and technology of RED and ASSIMILATE, we now have an efficient and affordable means to produce high-quality films, comparable to 35mm. This 4K digital revolution has given us the independence to think freely and more creatively; to create films with stronger visual impact; and not worry about high production or post production costs."



"Semshook", upper image set: REDCODE RAW file (top); after post production in SCRATCH (bottom).

"Channel V Promo", lower image set: REDCODE RAW file (top); after post production in SCRATCH (bottom).

All images courtesy of 8mm Productions, Mumbai, India.

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