

# SCRATCH is RED-Hot in Mexico City for 'Hotel Chelsea' at ERU Digital

The Japanese independent thriller *Hotel Chelsea* is pure international intrigue: written by and produced by Hiro Masuda of Japan with Masuda's company Ichigo Ichie Films LLC and Tender Pro for Ace Deuce Inc; starring Japanese actors Nao Nagasawa and Sawa Suzuki along with local New York actors; shot in New York City by Corey Eisenstein; directed by Jorge Valdés-Iga of Mexico; and color graded and finished by Erik Mariñelarena's post-production team at ERU Digital in Mexico City. The feature came together with the RED ONE™ Digital 4K Camera and ASSIMILATE's SCRATCH® 4K Digital Workflow.

Hiro Masuda's vision was to make a Japanese horror film that also had international appeal, and the legendary Hotel Chelsea in New York City was the ideal setting for his story. He wanted a fresh look for the Japanese audience as well, so he hired a Mexican director and an American crew. Masuda also planned for the film to be a digital cinema production due to budget constraints. Masuda notes, "The recent advancements in digital cinema technology for RED 4K cameras and the SCRATCH post workflow have brought about great benefits for filmmakers. Along with a talented crew, they enabled this international project to have high-production value on an indie budget."

Faced with a tight post-production budget, Masuda also required tight turnaround as well. This meant searching out a post house with colorists "fluent" in a 4K workflow. Erik Mariñelarena, then chief operating officer at ERU, notes, "The challenges for *Hotel Chelsea* were many. Demanding criteria like best color grading, imagery, turnaround times, performance, price, and deliverables are the norm. But the

nature of this full-length feature was complex: three stories within a story, which meant three distinct timelines. It was like color grading and finishing for three movies. Using SCRATCH, we maintained the color hues and look and feel throughout portions of the film, as well as created color distinctions to define the three timelines."

*Hotel Chelsea* is told in the present, with flashbacks to the past, and the third story line is imaginary. The murder plot also has a complicated twist that is out of chronological order. Masuda decided three colors would be used to establish the three distinct timelines in order to lead the audience to the astonishing climax and the murderer.



Color grading in SCRATCH for *Hotel Chelsea*; image courtesy of ERU Digital, Mexico City; © copyright 2009, *Hotel Chelsea* Film Partners, all rights reserved.

The feature thriller tells the story of a Japanese couple on their honeymoon at the Hotel Chelsea in New York. That night the wife finds her husband's dead body and a video tape of the brutal murder. An NYPD detective attempts to get to the bottom of the mystery of the murder within the locked room by interrogating a devastated wife. "The story line required numerous evening and dark shots, which are the most challenging for color grading and finishing," says Mariñelarena. "The SCRATCH color tools are so powerful that our colorist, Fernando González, was able to enrich the depth of the shots and delete the 'noise' that can cloud the visuals of a film. The result was a rich look of mystery that he carried throughout the feature."

The film is now winning critical acclaim on the film festival circuit, having been in Hamburg, New York, and several venues in the United States. *Hotel Chelsea* was awarded Best Foreign Film at the Myrtle Beach International Film Festival, where Jerry Dalton, director of the festival stated, "From the onset of the film, you realize the genius of the visuals that puts Hotel Chelsea in a class by itself for an independent film." The theatrical premiere for *Hotel Chelsea* will be in Tokyo this summer and plans are in the works for 2010 film festivals around globe, including Paris, London, Barcelona, Canada, Mexico, and South Korea.

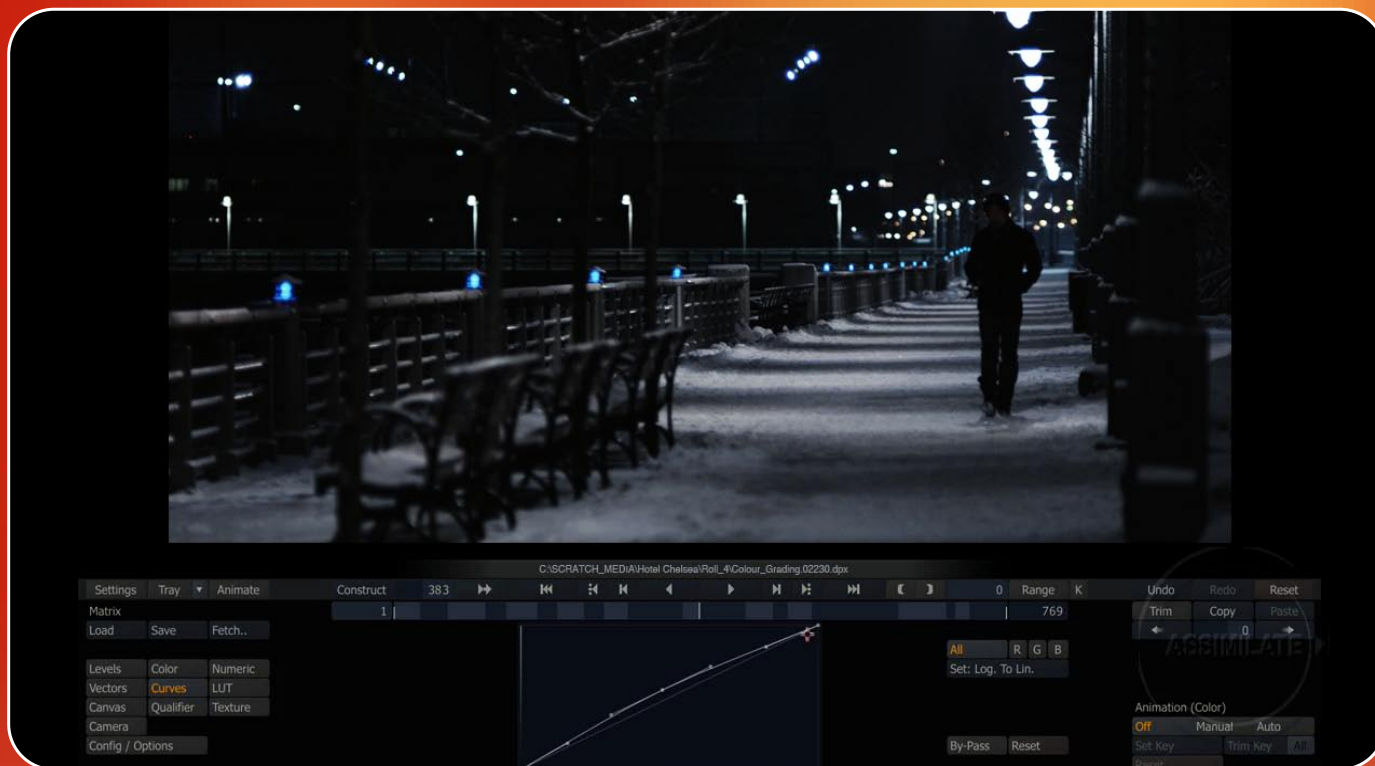
## Robust Post Features

"Another challenge came in the form of the H1N1 flu," says Mariñelarena, "We started the post last April, and needed to be finished in June. However, the swine flu intervened and the government stepped in with tough restrictions for working hours. Each person on the post team could only work five days a week, and only five people were allowed to work in the facility at any given time. Additionally, we had to make up for a lost

month when the editing got off schedule. We were fortunate to be well versed in the SCRATCH-RED 4K Workflow. The efficiency and ease of use of SCRATCH for managing data, color grading, and finishing enabled us to overcome the time constraints we faced and we met our deadline."

Mariñelarena adds, "We had numerous RED files – approximately 12,000 for the three timelines – and the data management tool kept track of it all. This level of tracking and sorting of files at the price point of SCRATCH is unheard of. We had the constructs stacked several layers high with several versions of a shot, and could immediately access and work on a shot on the fly."

Mariñelarena adds, "Initially we were going to work with RED files and those from another camera, but we ran into some issues with the non-RED files and fixed the gaps in Final Cut during editorial. Claudio Bautista used After Effects for the compositing and then transferred DPX sequences to SCRATCH for real-time 4K conform and color grading. Fernando was able to do the color grading and finishing in what was a streamlined process. He used the vector capability within the finishing tools to create beautiful vignettes for enhancing the imagery to perfection. Because the post tools are so simplified and natural to use within a real-time workflow, he was able to give his complete focus to the creativity needed during this project. SCRATCH was truly the bright light during all the challenges we faced."



Color grading in SCRATCH for Hotel Chelsea; image courtesy of ERU Digital, Mexico City;  
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“Hiro Masuda was extremely pleased with the quality of the final results and the deliverables,” says Mariñelarena. “He was very thankful that we gave him the quality of a high-end blockbuster within a tight budget and schedule.”

## Next up for Mariñelarena

Mariñelarena has now moved on to Warner Brothers as a producer, working on features and TV episodes. The SCRATCH digital workflow has been a good friend to him and he'll be

making use of it again in his new role.

Mariñelarena, who has 14 years in the entertainment industry, notes, “Digital cinema is clearly the future of filmmaking; that’s very clear. It’s advantageous for indies of course, but it’s also a huge win for the big studios. Everyone is concerned about timelines and budgets, and getting the best quality possible. While the RED camera produces superb imagery, we’re also seeing the growing use of other digital formats like HD Full-HD, and AVCHD. For the entertainment industry, SCRATCH is the

break-through post-tool suite that can work in any format in real time; one streamlined workflow for almost any project – 3D, 4K, 2K, HD, and film.”

[www.hotelchelseamovie.com](http://www.hotelchelseamovie.com) [www.ichigochiefilm.com](http://www.ichigochiefilm.com)



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