



Chilefilms Gets Busy Using SCRATCH

New DI workflow/media hub has immediate impact at leading DI house

In the Digital Intermediate (DI) market, time is money. The ability to efficiently manage and manipulate images, and the associated digits and data, has never been more important in the successful delivery of short and long-form films. The need for increased productivity drives today's successful business model for post-production facilities, which in turn means that improving flexibility and creative control at vital stages of the film production process are of paramount concern. The solution to all these issues is being provided by SCRATCH™, the new DI workflow solution to be launched at IBC 2004 by ASSIMILATE™, Inc.

"One integrated DI system in one facility, is a huge advantage..."

Chilefilms is one of the largest networks of post-production facilities and laboratories in the burgeoning Latin American film-production market. A SCRATCH beta site, and now an ASSIMILATE customer, the company has seen dramatic improvements in its DI workflow since integrating SCRATCH into its DI pipeline earlier this year.

"It's the difference between walking and riding a bicycle down an open road," says Cristian Aguilar, Chilefilms' business development director. "Our experience with SCRATCH has been so positive that it will become the system of choice for use on every motion picture project here."

Chilefilms, based in Santiago, Chile, is part of large and ever expanding empire offering film production, post production, audio, DI, laboratory, and screening facilities to filmmakers across Chile, Brasil, Argentina and Mexico. Chilefilms has already employed SCRATCH on Machuca (directed by Andrés Wood), the most successful blockbuster in Chilean motion picture history. The system is now being deployed on three more full-length features all scheduled for

release later this year: Cachimba (Smoking Pipe, directed by Silvio Caiozzi who won the best director award in the Montreal film festival); plus Unfaithful Women, (directed by Rodrigo Ortúzar); and Decent People (directed Edgardo Vierek).

Return on Investment

"Why did we need to invest in SCRATCH?" asks Carlos Roca, senior digital compositor and film recording specialist. "It's very simple really. SCRATCH immediately solved two of the biggest problems facing the DI market - the ability to conveniently and cost-effectively view native 2k digital film in real time, and the issue of storing and archiving huge amounts of data. With SCRATCH, we can easily scan in dailies and view up to five hours of 2k film at a time. The days of working with proxies, or tying up expensive compositing suites for viewing purposes are gone."

Roca added, "Although we currently have up to five hours of storage dedicated for SCRATCH, one of the great things is that it isn't prohibitively expensive to invest in more storage. We can expand our storage capacity over time, or even switch storage, and all in tune with the work coming through the door."

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But real-time 2k playback, convenient rendering to the film-recorder, and archiving to DLT tape are not the only benefits being reaped by Chilefilms. "The fact that within an intuitive timeline we can load, distribute, conform, colorize, paint, revise, readily use plug-ins, and prepare so much material all in one system and in one facility is a huge advantage, not just for our colorists and visual-effects team, but for the director of photography (DP) as well. Working in real-time 2k enables the DP to view scenes in context, make grading changes, and finesse the



images as required before committing to film, with the confidence that what they are creating digitally will appear correctly on the big screen."

SCRATCH within Different Workflows

Chilefilms has two workflows. Clients bring in their projects on Digi-Beta, DVCam, Beta SP, etc., and blow the material up to film resolution via one of its visual effects systems. In this instance, SCRATCH is used as a viewing system for final checking of the digital master before film output.

The other, higher quality workflow has 2k film directly scanned, using a high-end film scanner. It's then transferred into SCRATCH with the system acting as a hub or portal for data to be distributed to, or collected from, the peripheral editing/compositing and 3D animation suites.

These days, a producer will come into Chilefilms with film rolls and a cut list from the off-line edit. Each shot is then scanned and transferred directly into SCRATCH, with its film Keycode, where it is numbered and then edited to conform exactly to the off-line edit. Completed visual-effects shots are fed into SCRATCH and assembled along the timeline. A final, meticulous check against the off-line cut then occurs before rendering for the film recording or archiving to DLT tape.

Roca explains how he employed SCRATCH on the blockbuster movie Machuca. "As soon as I had completed the editing of the digital master I called on one of our colorists to color correct each one of the scenes. Later, I used the paint tool to remove some scratches and glitches, and then I separately rendered 20-minute segments for the 35mm film recording. The ability to work with 2k movie data in the same way and at the same speed as standard definition video is a huge advantage."

Color Management

To ensure consistency of color management throughout the various suites at Chilefilms, all monitors have been calibrated to correspond with the Look-Up-Tables (LUTs) integrated into SCRATCH's grading system. "ASSIMILATE's 1D and 3D LUTs are very accurate. We know, and the DPs know, that what appears on the monitors will be on the film print," says Roca.

"SCRATCH has an excellent color corrector and our colorists have almost all the tools they need," he

adds. "After the colorist goes through the film grading shot by shot, the director of photography is brought in to check the progress. For the first time since the off-line, the DP can see the shots in context at 2k and make any additional adjustments. Once the DP is happy, we shoot out the SCRATCH timeline direct to the film recorder and the results are then viewed in our screening theatre."

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"There's no doubt that SCRATCH has improved our productivity by speeding up our workflow," concludes Stefano Levera, Chilefilms' technical director. "We're very pleased to be a part of the beta program and we're really impressed at the speed with which our suggestions get implemented. It's clear the development team listens to what customers want. ASSIMILATE has produced a great product for the DI industry - versatile, integrated, real-time DI software that runs on low-cost commodity hardware, which gives you choices about how you want to work."

About Chilefilms

Chilefilms (www.chilefilms.cl), based in Santiago, Chile, is the headquarters for what is considered to be the most important audiovisual services center in South America. Chilefilms holdings include several companies that offer a wide variety of services for the film, video, television and audio markets. Supported by skilled artists, experienced engineers and sophisticated state-of-the-art technology, these companies include Film Laboratory; Distribution and Exhibition; Post-Production; Television Production; Computer Graphics Imagery; EFP and ENG services; and Music Production & Record Label.

About ASSIMILATE

ASSIMILATE (www.assimilateinc.com) is creating the DI r-evolution with integrated, real-time, 2k digital intermediate (DI) solutions for film. The company is committed to empowering a broad spectrum of creative professionals with state-of-the-art DI solutions that deliver optimal price/performance.