

the *DI R-evolution*

assimilate

SCRATCH Gets High Scores at PostWorks, New York

Digital Intermediate (DI) technology is put to the test with Billy Baldwin, President of PostWorks, New York. His passion for building a streamlined process for post production has put him on a search for the best systems and solutions that can easily interact within a DI pipeline, and thereby condense production schedules while maintaining the integrity of the project.

From short and long-form Academy Award winning features to intriguing trailers, to Emmy Award winning television shows and nationally broadcast commercials, PostWorks, New York has a well established reputation for post-production quality, technical expertise and talent. Combining this with the service-oriented values of a boutique has earned PostWorks, New York a long list of satisfied clients that includes numerous independent filmmakers as well as the larger film studios and television networks, such as Paramount, Lions Gate, Sony Pictures Classics, Warner Bros., Universal Studios, HBO, and NBC to name a few.

During the past five years PostWorks has built a vast collection of creative and technical services within its 90,000 square-foot facility in New York City, making it one of the most comprehensive and diverse post houses on the East Coast. This has enabled PostWorks' clients to take six Academy Award nominations and three Oscars in technical categories for *Fog of War* (Sony Pictures Classics), *Bowling for Columbine* (United Artists), and *Born into Brothels* (HBO Films).

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"Our total focus is to provide superior film post production for our clients. The film industry runs on an adrenaline high at all times and it's our job to make the post process run smoothly, without missing a beat in perfecting the look the client is striving for," says Baldwin.

With his passionate stance on the high value of DI, Billy Baldwin could well be considered an industry evangelist for the DI process. He notes that, "We're

always on the look out for emerging technologies that will add to our efficiency and extend our productivity. DI is the future, revolutionizing filmmaking both artistically and economically. A data-centric DI workflow brings the speed and versatility found in digital video production to the film world, while maintaining the highest standards of quality and resolution. The SCRATCH Data-Centric Workflow Solution is a natural fit."



Milarepa: SCRATCH Player with thumbnail timeline in tray

Baldwin spearheaded a PostWorks decision team that included Matthew Schneider, Director of Technology and Corey Stewart, Systems Engineer, who thoroughly tested the available options for data-centric DI solutions. According to Baldwin, working with data in the digital film world requires more than great stand-alone tools. "To build a streamlined process that wrangles with all the data becomes a huge priority and data management becomes a critical factor. SCRATCH gets the all-around high scores," says Baldwin. "In our review of other data-centric offerings, we found that SCRATCH had the most realistic approach to data management and indexing, as well as the best price/performance value. The other DI systems were like a lobster trap – you can get the files in, but you can't easily get them out."

SCRATCH in the Workflow

PostWorks installed ASSIMILATE's SCRATCH Data-Centric Workflow Solution, which runs on a commodity HP XW9300 desktop PC, along with several viewing systems in February '05 and immediately began integrating SCRATCH into their DI workflow. "We needed an end-to-end workflow solution, one that enables quality control throughout the post process," says Baldwin. "It can take up to twenty hours to record a single reel of film, so we want to be sure the production quality is perfect throughout the pipeline before moving to this step."

Baldwin added, "We've been able to effectively use SCRATCH at the various stages of production. Starting at the front end, we use SCRATCH to conform files as they come off the scanner. We can then pre-visualize for effects and analyze the files for grain structure, dirt, and scratches. At the back-end, we check frame counts and perform a final QC using the same look-up tables (LUTs) as all of our other suites, thus creating consistency in the film's look and color throughout the pipeline and facility. Another boost to the process is that SCRATCH easily integrates with the LUTs and visual effects from leading industry vendors." With SCRATCH, PostWorks has been able to maximize the efficiency of its production workflow, off-loading tasks from the costly proprietary systems to push several feature films through the pipeline at the same time. The result says Baldwin is increased productivity and an incredibly high return on its SCRATCH investment. And in the future, PostWorks plans to pre-conform all film projects with SCRATCH before they move on to all other suites.

PostWorks has moved well beyond the traditional concept that DI is all about color correction. "We're benefiting from SCRATCH's full set of features before the project moves into the main color suite, which means our team can use it for grain and scratch removal, editing, paint, review and playback, and most importantly, data management. Color correction is definitely a key component of any film, but our business is also about creating multiple products from the same files, like film, trailers, foreign versions, which makes data management essential," says Baldwin.

High Client Satisfaction

PostWorks' clients have found that SCRATCH is ideal

for previewing visual effects in real-time 2k in their state-of-the-art viewing theater. "You're seeing the actual native file - no proxies - projected in 2k, which is a substantial benefit. You're viewing exactly how the film will look on the big screen to audiences, which allows the creative and technical teams, as well as the client, to make decisions about the quality of the effects, grain structure, mattes, keys, composting, color, or any of the subtle nuances that make the difference for a shot to be considered believable." SCRATCH has already been put to good use in 2k

DI projects at PostWorks, such as trailers for Sony Pictures Classics' Junebug and Lions Gate's Fierce People, as well as an indie film Milarepa, directed by Neten Chokling Rinpoche.

Baldwin sees SCRATCH working well as a very cost-effective, stand-alone DI solution for film trailers,

title sequences, commercial or cinema spots, and restoration projects. "SCRATCH has all the capabilities to complete the digital intermediate process for such projects, which is quite cool. We can now easily expand our capabilities by off-loading the expensive big guns and still do very high-quality work," says Baldwin. For example, PostWorks is currently working on major restoration projects for concert footage of two rock and roll music icons. "This footage is a legacy of these music legends, not only important to their personal archives but to their fans worldwide as well. It's important that we get it right."

The Payback

"At a fraction of the cost of high-end proprietary systems, there's no doubt that the price/performance value of SCRATCH was a key factor in our decision process. With SCRATCH, we're setting in place a workflow that not only manages the myriad files of a feature film, but also has the right DI features to augment our existing systems," says Baldwin. "At the same time, we're looking to the future. Software-based systems have the low cost and flexibility that enables quick response to the rapid developments in technology, as well as the creative demands of today's filmmakers. We're confident that the SCRATCH product line will continue to expand with new features and capabilities, and we plan to use this to our advantage."



Milarepa: SCRATCH single layer CONstruct view