

QLab in Mumbai: Five SCRATCH Systems for High-End DI and Training

India's QLab turned to SCRATCH when its existing DI system ran into "issues". The experience was so good, the company now has five SCRATCH systems deployed across its DI/photochemical lab and burgeoning Digital Film School training facility.

Founded by current chairman and MD Manohar Shetty, QLab has provided services to filmmakers for nearly 40 years. It's the only company in Mumbai to offer a total shoot-to-screen package: lab, data, editorial, DI, VFX, CG, RED 4K cinema, restoration, Dolby 5.1/DTS mixing, as well as film post. QLab has printed over 250 Hollywood features for Indian release, including *2012*, *Michael Jackson's This Is It*, *Red Cliff*, *James Bond 007 Quantum of Solace* and *Casino Royale*, *Harry Potter* and *Iron Man*, as well as servicing top Hindi films such as *Teen Patti*, *Striker*, *Taare Zameen Pe*, *What's Your Rashee?* and *No Smoking*.

Amit Shetty, director, ACI, chief colorist and head of DI at QLab, explains why SCRATCH is now the company's frontline DI system.

Why SCRATCH? Our selection was not based on what the market talks about, but what we are comfortable with. SCRATCH has great tools to complete projects from start to

finish, and it fits perfectly into our existing environment. It's very easy to use, has a great GUI, and bridges the digital and photochemical domains.

ROI: SCRATCH is data-centric and offers all the performance of competing systems for ingest, grading, and mastering DPX deliverables. As the cost of investment in SCRATCH is lower than traditional "big" DI systems, we can offer clients more competitive rates. It's perfect for all our future DI needs.

Ease does it: SCRATCH is quite straightforward. Each area of operation flows in a logical form - precise grades, printer point correction, Scaffolds, masks, qualifiers, open source LUTs -

which can be shared across multiple systems, as well as by our VFX department. Plus, SCRATCH's real-time 4K playback and grading of RED R3D files is a breeze.





SCRATCH Scaffolds used for finishing of *Rokkk* imagery; image courtesy of QLab, Mumbai.

Real-time 4K: We are among the first to have installed RED Rocket cards on our SCRATCH systems. This lets us playback and debayer RED 4K files at full resolution in real-time, as well as transfer to D5 tapes (with the 2K processor) for archival or DCI mastering.

Rokkk & Roll: Our first major project using SCRATCH is a 2K Log DPX DI on the 107-minute Hindi feature film *Rokkk (Stop!)*, shot on 35mm. We met the expectation of our clients, including the DP Mr. Shakeel, who finds the result outstanding. The first copy of the film, with no analyzer or table correction, was shown to prospective customers by our client IKKON Films. They loved it and the film has just released. Point proven: SCRATCH can take on any of the “big brother” systems and win.

Grading: *Rokkk* is a ghost/horror film, with 80 percent of the footage shot at night. We used SCRATCH Scaffolds and the various grading and color tools for many tasks - to crush the blacks, hide or lessen grain artifacts, desaturate skin tones, isolate faces, track animated grades through scenes, and generally enhance the mood lighting. The final data-master recorded back to film perfectly, and the results look great.

Frontline DI: We have every confidence in SCRATCH, and have more features scheduled for a full DI – three shot on RED 4K, and two animated films that will require working with high-rez linear TIFFs before mastering to Log DPX files. Also, we’re one of the few facilities worldwide to carry out colorization – we’re using SCRATCH to deliver the finishing touches and DI on the black-and-white 1962 war-classic *Haqeeqat*.

LUTs: SCRATCH has high-quality built-in LUTs, and it was easy to integrate them with our photochemical printer lights. We have actually calibrated the whole of our lab around them and get great results on film-outs. We use the Truelight color management system and are currently testing out Cinespace.

3D: With five RED cameras working round the clock, we are looking at 3D stereoscopic shooting and a 3D workflow in SCRATCH. SCRATCH is an ideal choice to conform, color grade, set the convergence and output the data on stereo projects.

Digital Film School: There is a gap in the training market for DI. As there are more SCRATCH systems in India than other competing systems, SCRATCH is the right system to offer people who want to learn the art and craft of color grading through our Digital Film School. To date, we have trained eight of our own staff on SCRATCH, and plan to train 35 people each year to a level where they can get immediate employment.

www.qlab.in www.digitalfilmschool.in



SCRATCH Scaffolds used for finishing of *Kill Zone* imagery; image courtesy of QLab, Mumbai.