

# Cinefilm DI in SCRATCH for NFocus Indie Feature

## 4K Digital Technology Underpinning for NFocus' First Feature

While many corporate and commercial production companies dream of making a feature film, a Lakeland, Florida team brought their dream into focus, befitting a company named NFocus. To create its first feature, 'Endure' (2010), NFocus used the latest digital cinema technologies – the RED ONE™ 4K Digital Camera for the shoot and ASSIMILATE's SCRATCH® Digital 4K Workflow at Cinefilm in Atlanta, GA for the post production.

With 30+ years of production experience, NFocus knows the ins and outs of filmmaking. With the right digital tools at the right price, the principals decided now was the right time to create their own feature film but they needed the right script. "We looked at a lot of scripts, but nothing seemed to fit, so I wrote the thriller myself," says film director Joe O'Brien. "It was a real challenge to create a storyline that could be shot in 16 days, and then get high quality DI on a tight budget. The end result - a high quality film - is extremely gratifying."

*Endure* is the story of veteran detective Emory Lane, played by Judd Nelson of the famed Brat Pack, who finds a shocking photo of a young woman in the twisted metal of a car crash. Lane must risk everything to identify and find the woman before it's too late.

### Shooting with RED 4K

The NFocus production team had worked with the RED 4K camera on commercial and short-form indie projects, but this was their first RED feature.

NFocus editor Jim Carleton, who also served as executive producer for *Endure*, notes, "The complexity of handling and organizing footage on a feature can be overwhelming, so planning ahead was a critical step for saving time, money, and frustration. We consulted many sources

**Actor Tyler Craven kneels next to the victim in a scene from *Endure*, as DP Stephen Campbell (left) frames a RED Camera crane shot. Image courtesy of NFocus.**



Tom Arnold in scene from *Endure*; image courtesy of NFocus.

on the best workflow for RED. Data management was essential for all the material, as we had two RED cameras on-set most days for *Endure* and a third for some night scenes. We transcoded all the media to ProRes for offline, but I did not view the dailies and break down the scenes until after we wrapped, which is unusual. But since I was on the set each day, I was very familiar with the material before I started the cut.” Carleton completed the cut in-house at NFocus; then completed sound design with Rick Morris of Maverick Sound in Winter Garden, FL; and then went on to Cinefilm in Atlanta, GA for the DI.

NFocus relied on their strong relationship with DP Stephen Campbell to create the visual style of the film. “We had all worked with the RED camera before and decided early on that it would provide a cost effective alternative to 35mm,” says Campbell. “While it doesn’t have all the latitude of film, it holds up well in the highlights as long as you treat it like 320ASA daylight film. We had a lot of night scenes that required more attention to lighting, but I was very happy with the detail in the blacks once it was color graded in SCRATCH. I was able to view the grade and make changes in real-time 2K in the DI theater at Cinefilm.”

## 4K DI in SCRATCH

Carleton explains, “I do most of the color correction for spots myself using FCP Color, but we knew this feature would require more experienced color grading skills and technology, so we turned to Cinefilm in Atlanta.”

Two years ago, Cinefilm equipped their facility with the first DI projection suite in the Atlanta region that was specifically designed for indie features. “We’ve done several film and RED

features using FCP Color in the past, but we had just upgraded to ASSIMILATE’s SCRATCH digital workflow, which was the only finishing system to directly read the RED RAW files,” says John Petersen, a skilled colorist at Cinefilm. “In SCRATCH, I was able to do the offline conform effortlessly. I loaded in the EDL and the media was immediately at my fingertips; it was wonderful.”

Petersen adds, “A clear advantage of working digitally is the efficiency that occurs throughout the post process. For example, with the editor, director, and DP together in the suite, we were able to collaborate quickly to match the footage from multiple cameras and create the various emotional moods this

suspense-thriller required. Also, we were able to load all the RED files onto the hard drive. During the final DI, we needed to replace two shots. I was able to quickly pull the shots from the files and immediately replace the shots in the master grade. This avoided a new project file, which equates with time and money.”

“The efficient workflow and intuitive GUI allowed me to focus more on the artistic aspects of color grading rather than the process. This way you can stay in the creative groove rather than starting and stopping,” says Petersen. The SCRATCH Scaffolds tool for finishing gave me great creative freedom,



Joey Lauren Adams and Judd Nelson in scene from *Endure*; image courtesy of NFocus

especially when working with the lighting and close-ups.”

Cinefilm has SCRATCH loaded on a RED-BOXX workstation, running in Windows 7. They now have RED Rocket, which makes the 4K post process even faster. “This is a very stable, robust tool suite,” says Petersen. “I really beat on this system and it can take it.”

## Customer Satisfaction

NFocus knew that quality DI would be critical to the success of

*Endure*. “Once you see what a colorist in the DI process can bring to the final look, you’ll always budget for this as part of the finishing process, and work backwards - we feel it’s that important,” says O’Brien.

For a production team’s first feature, *Endure*, has a big-budget look. “We were fortunate with our casting,” explains Carleton, “with LA talent like Judd Nelson, Devon Sawa, Tom Arnold, and Joey Lauren Adams, our female lead. The rest of our cast was from the excellent talent pool here in Florida. Looking at the finished work, it’s hard to believe it was all shot in just 16 days.”

O’Brien notes, “The biggest challenge for me as a director was to get the best performance while hearing someone whisper ‘hurry up’ throughout each day. The next step, after completing post, is the festival circuit and we are in early discussions with interested distributors already.”

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Night scene from *Endure*; image courtesy of NFocus