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VR Short,"The Doghouse": Virgil Kastrup Takes On Five Points of View

Virgil Kastrup (http://rgba.dk), colorist and on-line editor, has immersed himself in the virtual reality world with his color grading of "The Doghouse", a Danish short that was featured at the New York Film Festival, in September/October. "The Doghouse" is the brainchild of Makropol, a company that develops alternative projects for new media storytelling, using the latest technologies to achieve maximum creativity and impact (www.makropol.dk). In a recent interview Kastrup discusses the project.

I was called in to do the color grading once the film had been shot using two GoPro HERO3 cameras with wide-angle lenses. Like all projects, it had its own unique challenges and I was new to working on 3D virtual reality material. I've been using ASSIMILATE's SCRATCH for color grading for several years so I knew it had the flexibility to handle 3D content and it was first to support the Oculus Rift headset.

The setting for the film is a dinner table with five guests, and for the shoot each guest is wearing an Oculus Rift headset. The viewer then experiences the same story from five different perspectives at the same time. For the color grading, I received ProRes files with two media streams side-by-side. But the project became more complex with five sets of these files, one set for each of the five points-of-view in the story, and each twenty minutes long.

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The quality of the final material required finessing the light to dark hues. I also had to consider a color palette that would transcend all five characters for continuity and yet maintain the unique perspective of each character. The director and producer, Johan Knattrup Jensen and Mads Damsbo respectively, attended the interactive client sessions to review the several versions I had created. Together we were able to finalize a look that put all the characters within the same color universe, yet not matching.

During the grading, I wore the Oculus Rift headset so I had the sense of complete immersion into the story. I really felt as if I were viewing a scene through someone else's eyes. I know the software so the grading was fluid and natural to me. It's easy to get to the creative aspects of SCRATCH – its flexibility allows me to try new things and to tackle and easily resolve a wide range of complex grading issues.

While the concept of virtual reality is new I think all colorists should feel comfortable working in this new format. With good tools like SCRATCH – and they're continually improving – working in VR can be a simplified process and tremendously exciting.

To learn more about "The Doghouse", see:
www.filmlinc.org/nyff2015/films/the-doghouse
http://skammekrogen.dk/
www.facebook.com/skammekrogen?ref=ts&fref=ts

To learn more about Virgil Kastrup, see:
http://rgba.dk

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