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NATPE 2002

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One on One makes the transition to 24P HD

Peak Experience

HD is up to the challenge with this indie feature



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If you want to see a movie pro get excited, ask George Lucas, Chuck Barbee, or Mike Figgis about Sony Digital Electronic Cinematography. Each is using Sony tools to explore new creative possibilities.

“*Star Wars: Episode II* is our last giant step toward Digital Cinema,” says George Lucas, describing his decision to shoot principal photography with Panavision-modified Sony HDCAM® 24P camcorders. “The familiar look and feel of motion picture film are present in this digital 24P system. And the picture quality between the two is indistinguishable on the large screen.”

Warm Blooded Killers is a dark comedy shot on Digital Betacam® tape and printed to 35mm. “I truly believe digital is the

future,” says Chuck Barbee, the director of photography. “The whole process was surprisingly good. And compared to film, raw tape stock costs next to nothing. This really lowers the cost of getting it in the can, which means that more projects can get made.”

Mike Figgis challenges our most basic conventions of narrative in *Timecode*, the movie that follows four simultaneous storylines in four unbroken 93-minute takes. The production demonstrates the quality (not to mention the recording time) of Sony DVCAM acquisition. Says Figgis, “There’s no way we could have done this with traditional techniques.”

We shot *Star Wars: Episode II* in 61 days in 5 countries in the rain and desert heat averaging 36 setups per day without a single camera problem. We have found the picture quality of the 24P Digital HD system to be indistinguishable from film.

— George Lucas and Rick McCallum

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HDNet Covers Olympic Speed Skating

HDNet, the world's only all-High Definition national television network, broadcast exclusive live coverage of the U.S. Speed Skating Olympic Trials from Salt Lake City, December 19 through 22. The four days of high definition coverage features 16 hours of men's and women's short track and long track speed skating events and was made available on HDNet's channel 199 on DIRECTV.

Panasonic Creates 5th Avenue HD Fashion Show Display

Panasonic Broadcast and Kenneth Cole Productions, Inc. have created unique High Definition video displays featuring the designer's latest fashions on New York's Fifth Avenue. Showcasing Panasonic's progressive-scan High Definition video technology, Kenneth Cole's Rockefeller Center flagship store uses vertically-mounted, 50-inch High Definition plasma displays to display HD video of models wearing the retailer's fall fashions in windows facing the Rockefeller Center Promenade, one of the most highly-trafficked tourist areas in the world. The ultra-slim Panasonic TH-50PHD3U 50-inch plasma displays provide the ideal platform for HD video presentations. A low-cost HD video server based on Internet and DVD-RAM technology, also developed by Panasonic Broadcast, feeds the panels.

Pasadena adopts HD

Primarily for budget reasons, the Fox television series *Pasadena* has adopted 24P HD as their origination format. 35mm was out of the question financially, and the choice was between 16mm and 24P. After testing the format, DP Roy Wagner, felt that 24P was the best choice for the series.

JVC Introduces new HD VCR

JVC has introduced what they are calling the first VCR with HDTV recording and playback capabilities available to consumers. The model HM-DH3000U features a high-speed mode with a 28.8 mbps data transfer rate, and can record four hours of HD programming on a 50GB DF-480 cassette. Linked to a digital set-top box via an IEEE-1394 terminal, the VCR allows recording of 1080i, 720p, 480p and 480i ATSC formats. The deck will also play traditional analog tapes.

APS adds Sony HD Vialta Telecine and Da Vinci 2K

American Production Services completed installation of a new HD Telecine in their facility in Seattle. The telecine is the Sony FVST-1000 Vialta multi-resolution telecine. Simultaneous recording of HDTV and standard definition signals is possible. Academy 35, Super 35, S16 and 16 mm are the film formats supported. Color correction is accomplished via the Da Vinci systems 2K color corrector equipped with Defocus and additional Power Tier options for advanced effects in film-to-tape and tape-to-tape environments. The noise reduction system is the Digital Vision DVNR-1000HD. Dual Evertz Microsystems' 9025 Universal Keycode/Arriocode/Aatoncode Translators provide filmcode translation simultaneously in High Definition and standard definition video formats. John Davidson, veteran colorist, will drive the new equipment. Addition of the telecine completes APS HD capability, having already led the way in the post-production side of the HD business nationally.

King Biscuit Produces Ringo, The Cult and Marilyn Manson HD shows

The King Biscuit Entertainment Group just completed HD production on three concerts designed for DVD release and possible future broadcast. Ringo Starr & His All-Starr Band was taped in High Definition at Chicago's Rosemont Theatre. The Cult and Marilyn Manson were shot five days apart at LA's Grand Olympic Auditorium. Lighting design for the programs was done by Jeff Ravitz of Visual Terrain, Inc.

HD for Sears with Fujinon lenses

Core Digital Technologies, Inc. and SWTV Production Services Inc., have placed 13 Fujinon HDTV lenses in a new hybrid HD/SDI production truck for CBS College Football. Built in conjunction with specifications for CBS Sports Network requests for High Definition production, the production truck has already been employed for two Southeast College (SEC) football games for the network. Throughout the SEC season, games are being broadcast in both 1080i/16:9 aspect ratio HDTV and in 601/4:3 standard definition television to Sears department stores in the U.S. Within Sears' stores, SD and HDTV Samsung television sets are arranged next to each other so consumers can view the difference in image quality between the two telecasts.

Paradise FX and 3D HD in the Persian Gulf

Max Penner, technical guru for 3D at Paradise FX, recently taped a 3D HD documentary feature for the Saudi oil company Saudi Aramco. The doc is designed to be shown in a museum in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. During the 28-day shoot, Max filmed ground shots of distilleries and aerial shots of oil tankers and drilling platforms in the Persian Gulf. He used Fujinon HDTV cine-style prime lenses on two Sony F900 camcorders. The two-camera rig weighed about 65 pounds, much lighter than previous generations of 3D gear.

NBC Joins Prime Time HD Group

Adding *Crossing Jordan* to HD broadcasts available in HD, NBC joins CBS and ABC in the transition to HD broadcasting. Previously only *The Tonight Show* was broadcast in HD by the network.

Comcast Launches HDTV on Cable Systems

Comcast Cable Communications, Inc. has launched HDTV services, which will give more than 1.3 million cable customers in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware access to HD broadcasts provided by ABC, NBC, CBS, HBO and Showtime. Comcast is the only company in the region to offer such a lineup of HD programming. The cable industry has been criticized as the last holdout for making the transition to HD broadcast possible, but this move is clearly a sign that things are changing. Congratulations to Comcast for the courage to step forward.

According to Jim switches to HD

The sitcom *According to Jim* starring Jim Belushi switched from 16mm film to 24P HD midseason. Derek Grover was instrumental in making the switchover. Panavision provided the cameras and Derek worked on making the transition smooth. The decision to make the change was primarily financial, and the production team is very happy with the image quality.



HD

Flex (Flex Alexander) and Duane (Kelly Perine) in UPN's sitcom One on One

So You Want It In HD

by Jay Ankeney

The days when we heard “Filmed before a live studio audience” may soon be as distant as the Alka Seltzer Kid or the Tydee Bowl Man as first TV dramas and now prime time sitcoms are rapidly adopting the benefits of High Definition production. Almost all of the shows planned for next year’s season are considering it, but perhaps even more significantly many comedy series already in production are in the process of switching from cameras loaded with 35mm or Super 16mm film, to cameras feeding signals to HD tape in the 24P format. And they are finding that the migration is surprisingly smooth.

One of the first to lead the way is the comedy *One on One*, a production of The Greenblatt Janollari Studio and Daddy’s Girl Productions in association with Paramount Network Television that airs Monday evenings at 8:30 on UPN. Created by Eunetta T. Boone, who shares Executive Producer credit with Robert Greenblatt and David Janollari, *One on One* centers on the father/daughter relationship between local sportscaster, Mark “Flex” Washington (played by Flex Alexander) and his spirited daughter Breanna (Kyla Pratt) with the sometimes help of her two best friends, the dedicatedly free-spirited Spirit (Sicily) and rock star wannabe Amaz (Robert Rí’chard).

Although the pilot of *One on One* was shot the previous year in 35mm, its producer, Craig Wyrick-Solari, was very interested in exploring the possibilities of shooting it in 24P High Definition even before the show’s regular season premier last September 3rd.

“We were looking to save some of the production costs that come with shooting in 35mm by using Super 16mm instead,” Wyrick-Solari recalls, “but just before production began we learned that UPN was going to cut



Camera operators for *One on One* include Stephen Jones, at center, and Bryan McKenzie at far right

our budget if we shot in Super 16. I had some good experiences with High Definition tape the previous season because I had used it while producing *That’s My Bush* for Comedy Central. Most of the studio people still favored 35mm, but since UPN was already shooting promos in 24P we were able to sell them on letting us shoot *One on One* in HD.”

Knowing how important it was to gather a core team with HD experience, producer Wyrick-Solari hired Derek

Continued on next page...

“It looks way better than Super 16 and even has some advantages over 35mm film. And since HD tape offers you a 50 minute load, you don’t have to stop and change reels every 10 minutes as with film. It makes the creative process flow smoother.”

— Craig Wyrick-Solari



Breanna (Kyla Pratt) and Duane (Kelly Perine) on the set of One on One

Grover to be the show's 24P High Definition technical engineer, Eric Clay as the on-set colorist, and made arrangements for Rose Calabrese to handle the post production color timing at Laser Pacific Media where the show would be edited. He also insisted they use the Panavision version of Sony's CineAlta HDW-F900 camera system to take advantage of its improved lenses and internal software.

Now that they have taken the plunge, Wyrick-Solari feels 24P is the medium of the future. "It looks way better than Super 16 and even has some advantages over 35mm film," he says. "And since HD tape offers

you a 50 minute load, you don't have to stop and change reels every 10 minutes as with film. It makes the creative process flow smoother."

Even though they shoot 7 or 8 takes per scene with four cameras rolling, Wyrick-Solari says 24P technology has kept *One on One's* production costs under budget. "Not only have we found significant savings in stock expenditures, but even the lighting packages needed for High Definition shooting cost less," he tells us, "especially compared to the amount of light needed to flood the set for Super 16. Going to 24P has been a change that's worked out all for the better."

Even though Bruce Finn, the show's director of photography, shot the pilot for *One on One* on 35mm he was enthusiastic about shooting the series itself in High Definition. As DP on the hit show *The Hughleys* for four years, Finn had worked in 35mm for the first two seasons when it was on ABC and in 16mm during the last two when it was picked up by UPN. He had even done some tests with 24P digital capture on their set. "I was kind of both excited and petrified about moving into 24P for *One on One*," Finn smiles. "I had played with the

Continued on page 10...

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because it's the one time a year I can get a "snapshot" of what's going on in my industry. It provides a venue for our station group to meet, see new product, acquire needed programming, gather new ideas and renew old friendships.

—Pat Patton

Director of Programming
KRON-TV, San Francisco

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One on One cast from left to right: Arnaz (Robert Ri'chard), Breanna (Kyla Pratt), and Spirit (Sicily)

system at Panavision a bit, but there was so much over-the-top hype about the medium floating around the industry that I was somewhat skeptical. After all, most previous attempts to replace shooting film with digital acquisition had proved to be more chrome than horsepower."

The producers of *One on One* had designed the show to have a rich, film-like cinematic look and Finn was concerned about delivering what they expected using HD technology. "That's when I met Derek Grover, who was to be the show's 24P digital imaging technician," Finn says, "and Derek made me enormously comfortable. With his help, by the time I had lit the set he had the 24P HD cameras ready and when we turned them on the Paramount execs were very impressed. I'm a huge fan of the Panavision Primo lenses, and combined with the Sony HDW-F900 camera the images looked like a million bucks."

Finn is in the unique position of shooting two sitcoms airing back-to-back on UPN, one in Super 16mm (*The Hughleys*), the other in 24P HD (*One on One*) and he has learned to compensate for the differences. One key factor is the way the two media handle depth of field. "The target size of the image that is focused through our 'Panavised' CineAlta camera is only 11mm," he explains. "That means the High Definition picture's depth doesn't fall off as quickly as it does when using a film camera. We've learned to adjust for this by adding neutral density filters to the lens so we can shoot wide open, with an f-stop of 1.6. That results in a digital photography look that more closely emulates even 35mm film."

Finn patented his own foldable modular diffusion box called the Gam Box to provide a soft projected front light which seems to enhance the look of High Definition. "The combination of this kind of soft light with the

high resolution of 24P results in a very flattering image," he says. "This has become the foundation of the whole lighting theory I use when shooting HD."

From the beginning, the technical guru behind the success of *One on One* using 24P High Definition has been Derek Grover, who had been instrumental in getting the International Cinematographer's Guild, Local 600, to establish a new union position called "Digital Imaging Technician". "I'm kind of like the intermediary between the media and the director or photography's art," he reflects. "Until DP's learn how to use HD, I'm their checks and balances. Five years from now, when HD cinematography becomes commonplace, I'll probably be out of a job."

Grover has found that the Hollywood TV industry has been laboring under several misconceptions that have hampered the adoption of 24P. "Until now, the word on the street has been that 24P is not user friendly," he says. "Some have claimed there were problems syncing dailies, coordinating time code, and matching cameras. But we have found none of these concerns really pose significant problems."

This became especially important when Grover learned the Paramount executives were using *One on One* as a test bed to evaluate future 24P productions. "Back in early September when I loaded in the show, the pressure was like being under a microscope," Grover admits, "but I'd used this technology before so I was confident it would work just fine. By the time we had shot the third episode the higher ups could not believe how good it looked, and since we are saving \$35,000 per week in film-related costs I think we proved our point."

In fact, Disney's Touchstone Television has decided to shoot their entire Fall line-up of sitcom pilots in High Definition and Derek has been contracted to consult on several of their shows. He has even been hired to convert their *According to Jim* ratings winner from film to HD. "My guess would be that within the next year, all of the new sitcoms in prime time TV will be shot using HD," Derek says. "High Definition is looking to become a big factor in the future of TV production." ♦



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PHOTO BY:

B. Sean Fairburn, SOC
High Definition Cinematographer

The Art of High Definition

by Jay Ankeney

While the general production community is looking at High Definition as the next evolutionary step in mainstream video recording, some visionaries are adopting this new medium as a canvas enabling them to create and present images never seen before. One of the leaders in this movement is Bill Viola, an internationally renowned artist who is widely regarded as one of the pioneers of Video Art, an ethereal artform that defies representational interpretation. Since 1972, Viola has been creating experiential video installations for museums and institutions around the world, from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, focusing on both mystical and reality-based universal human experiences.

Hailed as the Rembrandt of video, this spring Viola is in the process of completing his most ambitious work yet, currently titled *Going Forth By Day*. It is being shot at the Bill Viola Studios and throughout southern California and is destined for post at Laser-Pacific Media in Hollywood.

Going Forth By Day is a multi-screen fresco of five High Definition moving pictures playing in parallel on the four white walls of a museum's 80 X 30 foot gallery. The audience enters through a door within the first panel showing an abstract *Five Birth* image that resolves into a man swimming through shafts of light. On the left side, *The Path* is a panorama of three projections of people from different walks of life continually parading through a forest toward an unknown destination. *Deluge* on the far wall presents a street scene with a building façade surrounded by people who, after a scream of air raid sirens, are washed away by a giant flood of water. The

wall on the right is divided between *The Voyage* which depicts a cutaway house in which a man is dying. Behind the house is a body of water with a boat that eventually carries the man to the far shore. Next to it, a panel called *First Light* depicts a man ascending from a lake into the heavens as the sun rises behind him. Intentionally constructed without a linear plot, the whole installation represents the cyclical nature of life.

As a visual artist, Viola has always maintained his freedom from the restrictions of a pre-determined narrative structure. "*Going Forth By Day* is intended to be like a walk-in theater," Viola explains, "as if the five major scenes of a movie were playing simultaneously. The audience itself unfolds the narrative as they walk through the space."

Up to now, all of Viola's installations were shot either with standard definition video or 35mm film so moving into High Definition opened new horizons for the team behind its creation. "Since this project will stay in the HD video realm throughout production and presentation, we decided to go with the 1080/60i format," says Production Manager S. Tobin Kirk. "We tested several different cameras shooting 30i and 24P and decided that since we were not trying to emulate a 'film' look, Sony's 1080/60i HD video format was the best way for us to go."



BILL VIOLA *Going Forth By Day* (2002) (detail, *The Path*) Video / Sound installation ©Bill Viola

To help them get familiar with the new High Definition digital photography technology, Derek Grover of Ultimate Definition was brought in to consult as Digital Imaging Technician. "Having worked on several HD projects for the entertainment industry, this was a unique challenge," he tells us. "Creating these images to fulfill Bill Viola's vision gave me the opportunity to focus directly on the artistic potential of High Definition imagery."

Director of Photography Harry Dawson, a veteran of many previous Viola video and film projects, has been working on *Going Forth By Day* for a year and a half.



A panorama shot with three High Definition cameras. A composite of those images seamlessly blended together showing humanity in their walks of life.

"I'm glad we waited for the second generation of Sony's CineAlta camera, the HDW-F900, for principal photography," Dawson reflects. "It has both the spatial and temporal resolution we will need for our images to hold up when projected the size of a whole museum wall. Equally important, only recently have we found High Definition front projection systems that will do the images justice."

One of the biggest challenges Dawson has encountered for the Viola installation is the *First Light* section which involves a continuous 30 minute take spanning

real time lighting changes as daylight breaks over the scene. "This section pushes the limits of High Definition lighting from pre-dawn to sunrise," Dawson says, "which is something we could not accomplish in standard definition video while maintaining the necessary level of detail. We have a lot of experience shooting film for a scene like this in the past, but now we are able to bring back what we need using HD video."

Although a final decision has not yet been set by Viola Studios, the multi-channel High Definition playback server for the installation will probably be an H-DVP

Server Pro from Visual Circuits and they plan to use a Marquee LC9500 Ultra CRT-based HD projector from Video Display Systems to put the images on the museum walls.

Going Forth By Day was funded by a collaboration of Germany's Deutsche Bank and the Guggenheim Museum. It was commissioned for the Deutsche Guggenheim Museum in Berlin, Germany, and will be on exhibition between February 8th through April 28th. ♦

Overcranking HDCAM 24P for Robert Rodriguez

by Conrad Denke

On my monitor, I see bullets flying, glass shattering and bodies falling. It's an action sequence in the trademark style of director Robert Rodriguez. My company, American Production Services in Los Angeles has just posted a trailer for his forthcoming Miramax release, *Once Upon a Time in Mexico*. This is the third movie in the Mariachi series. And the trailer may well be the world's first to incorporate slow motion by means of "overcranking" the HDCAM 24P system.

Overcranking, as film professionals know, is the technology behind cinema slow motion. Overcranking occurs when movie film is shot at a high frame rate and displayed at a lower frame rate. The difference in picture rates creates the slow motion effect. While it has been easy to vary the picture rate in analog film production, the technique hasn't been duplicated in digital cinema until recently. (For an authoritative look at overcranking, see Mark Schubin's column in our March 2001 issue, Ed.)

Introduced just one year ago, Sony's HDCAM 24 frames-per-second progressive (24P) system has quickly become a favorite of producers, directors and cinematographers. The system combines full 1080 scanning lines with the 24 frames-per-second capture rate of film, to deliver many of the technical and psychophysical benefits of the "film look." And it offers fast, cost-effective production in all the ways that digital, electronic media can outperform analog, chemical-based media.

I got into High Definition four years ago because I believed it would finally bring electronic production to the level needed for theatrical releases. It has not disappointed me. HD has become like a religion and I want



HD slow motion tests shot by Cinematographer B. Sean Fairburn

to convert the world. It's great to see the HDCAM 24P system selected for many television episodics, theatrical releases, commercials and music videos that would previously have been shot on 35mm film. And that's all the more reason to pursue overcranking in HDCAM 24P.

The idea

Digital overcranking is made possible by the availability of a range of image capture rates on the Sony HDW-F900 HDCAM 24P camcorder. The available rates

include 23.98, 24, 25, 29.97 and 30 frames per second progressive, and 50, 59.94 and 60 fields per second interlace. Overcranking involves some ingenuity in post-production. For example, you can shoot at the rate of 60 fields per second interlaced (60i). Then in post-production, you can convert the footage from 60i to 60P. When you play back the result at 24P, you get motion rendered at 40% of the original speed.

Of course, 60i is just one of the eight image capture rates available with the Sony HDW-F900. Other rates,



HD slow motion tests shot by Cinematographer B. Sean Fairburn

especially 50i and 30P, give the cinematographer additional tools and possibilities.

HDCAM 24P overcranking at 60i or 50i requires interlace-to-progressive (I/P) conversion, a process that's well proven, if not necessarily transparent. I/P conversion is already used when NTSC and PAL productions

are "blown up" to film. The conversion can be performed by many non-linear editing systems, digital disk recorders and software packages, including products from Avid, Adobe, and Discreet Logic. In a pinch, you can even trick Sony videotape recorders into conversion, using Sony's Dynamic Motion Control.

The demo

It was at NAB last April that Roland House, the Arlington, Virginia post-production firm, demonstrated overcranking HDCAM 24P. Here at American Produc-

Continued on next page...



HD slow motion tests shot by Cinematographer B. Sean Fairburn

Testing, testing

Because the HDCAM 24P overcranking process involves Interlace to Progressive (I/P) conversion, there are some restrictions and limitations. These were anticipated by B. Sean Fairburn, SOC, an HD engineer and camera operator on the Mexico shoot. "You need to be careful with motion," said Fairburn. "The cinematographer has to be sensitive to the speed and axis of motion, speed and motion of the camera, and the shutter speed."

Fairburn explained that slower motion is always easier to handle. Motion toward or away from the camera is easier than a vertical or horizontal axis of motion. Subjects that move with the camera, as in car-mounted shoots are also easier to accommodate. And longer shutter speeds generate motion blur that, when desired, can also obscure I/P conversion artifacts. Said Fairburn, "You can get away with more when the factors are in your favor. But in any case, you've got to test it, test it, test it."

The results

As we posted the *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* trailer, we've had the opportunity to examine many of the overcranking effects. The results are excellent. While it is always possible to blow up an individual frame and search for artifacts, in actual viewing the results are seamless. We've screened 24P scenes intercut with converted "overcranked" 60i scenes and you'd be hard pressed to tell the difference.

In fact, we quickly put together 20 scenes for an uncolor-corrected rough edit of the trailer. When we screened it for senior Miramax management, they said "Great! The trailer is ready to go!"

As the months go by, I predict that this reaction will be typical. Others will share in the enthusiasm as more producers exploit HDCAM 24P overcranking. Even though you won't find this capability in Sony's operating instructions, I'm here to tell you there's no need to wait to exploit the potential of HD overcranking. It's a technology whose time has come. ♦

Conrad Denke is CEO and founder of American Production Services.

tion Services, we did further tests using our Sony HDCAM 24P equipment and various software programs. Chief engineer Scott Thomas supervised work in our Seattle facility, while APS Senior HD editor Walt McGinn conducted tests in our Los Angeles location. After many trials, we hit upon a combination that minimized motion artifacts, maintaining superb image quality.

Putting theory into practice

When director Robert Rodriguez chose HDCAM 24P to shoot *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* and chose American Production Services to post the trailer, the concept of 24P overcranking faced a practical test. Rodriguez burst upon the Hollywood scene with *El Mariachi*, a violent epic shot in 16mm for a reported \$7,000. A self-described "rebel without a crew," Rodriguez aims to shoot movies more cheaply, more quickly and with less crew

than typical Hollywood productions. He completes 50 or more set-ups a day in an industry where 20 to 25 set-ups are the norm. One favorite Rodriguez trick: using a wheelchair as a camera dolly. Just as Rodriguez is impatient with conventional film shooting schedules, he has been frustrated by the conventional film post-production process. This makes him an ideal candidate for shooting on HDCAM 24P.

Rodriguez movies are also technically demanding. In productions ranging from *Desperado* and *From Dusk Till Dawn* all the way to *Spy Kids*, Rodriguez has mastered the art of highly choreographed fight sequences. A Rodriguez movie is full of gunfire, explosions, fireballs, crashes, and stunts with bodies jumping, flying and falling. In fact, the demanding action sequences for *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* would really give our approach to 24P overcranking a thorough workout.

Love Wine

by Mark McNabb

When RigTown Pictures and Young Films decided to produce *Love Wine*, a romantic comedy shot on picturesque Pelee Island, they had important decisions to make.

For 14 days, they knew they would be on location, on an island, completely removed from the hub of film production. As well, with the ever-present 'indie' film budget, a streamlined crew and an ensemble cast, they knew they were all in for a challenge. What would make the difference? 24P HD brought life, and magic, to *Love Wine*.



Paul (Robert Andrew)

Mark McNabb, Director and Producer of *Love Wine*, recalls the first evening they were on the island, "We had taken the first shots of our lead, Tara Goudreau (*Bridget Love*), looking at the island from the bow of the ferry. No one knew exactly what to expect as the monitor was hooked up, to enjoy instant playback. I couldn't believe the silence, as the shots appeared, then the smiles. This

is what we were all here for."

Each and every night, cast and crew nestled around a 14" High Definition monitor, in a local restaurant. As they watched the dailies, they experienced not only an instant rush of morale but also a heightened excitement. It created a sense of anticipation for what could be created each and every day.

"We also wanted to produce a unique romantic comedy", added Mark. "As a Director, a story set in an urban

setting didn't appeal to me. With "Love Wine", being set on an island, and centered on a family run winemaking business, I was hooked. I saw the fantasy, the magic."

"As well, bars, apartments and back alleys are not that exciting, visually. With the 24P HD camera, we really wanted to tap it's potential, and the island, with it's vast locales, was ideal for that." ♦

For further information on *Love Wine* and RigTown's future 24P HD features, please visit us at www.rigtownpictures.com



Melaney (Daneen Boone)



Bill Kurtis will be featured in D-Town seminar



NATPE to Dazzle with D-Town

by William Conner

From the digerati to the dotcomers, visitors to NATPE's 2002 Conference & Exhibition, January 21-24, will discover a whole new area devoted to digital content and delivery at the Las Vegas Convention Center.

The 15,000 square-foot space, dubbed Digital Town or D-Town for short, will feature exhibits, demos, sessions and screenings dedicated to the latest in DTV, HDTV, ITV, wireless, post production and online entertainment, among other new technologies. Attendees will appreciate a specially designed theater for digital workshops and presentations sponsored by American Production Services, a hospitality lounge featuring wireless devices and HD monitors for leisurely viewing, and a state-of-the-art

digital remote truck from AT&T Digital Media Services.

One of the more active groups within NATPE's 4,200-strong membership is the HDTV consortium, which boasts more than 800+ members truly passionate about the format. Chaired by Conrad Denke, CEO of American Productions Services, the consortium includes Justin T. Albert from Discovery Digital Networks, PBS' Jerry Butler, Randall Dark, president of HD Vision, *100 Centre Street* co-executive producer Debbie Elbin, A&E host/producer Bill Kurtis, Tribune Entertainment's George NeJame, Gary Shapiro from the Consumer Electronics Association and CBS Studio's Barry Zegel.

The consortium, in association with the International Electronic Cinema Festival (IECF), will present *The Best*

of HD Programming to celebrate the format and honor the people working in it. A variety of programs, including everything from network shows to independent local productions, will run continuously in D-Town.

Known for producing invaluable educational seminars on the topic, the consortium will also stage and provide speakers for a number of panels. Headlining the list is prolific TV journalist and A&E host and producer Bill Kurtis, who will moderate the panel "HD Indie Production." Other sessions include "Primetime and HD," moderated by Conrad Denke, "Station Programming: Where the HD are We Going?," moderated by Doug Parker, WBNS-TV station manager. There will also be a panel on HD post production sponsored by Fuji Tape. ♦



"It was a pleasure working with professionals who really care about the quality of work they do." -Robert Emery, Director
"Swimming Upstream"

Director Robert Emery posts in HD @ APSLA



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Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner

Mind Meld: Secrets Behind the Voyage of a Lifetime

by Eric Mittleman

In early 2001 a partnership was forged between William Shatner and Creative Light Entertainment to create a multi-media presence for William Shatner. The first step in this relationship was to re-launch William Shatner's web site www.williamshatner.com. To make this profitable, a product was needed to sell on the web site.

A natural project was to get Shatner and Nimoy together for the first time for an in-depth and personal conversation. Shatner put it best, "We wanted to put something definitive down for the record, but the conditions were two friends talking one-on-one. We wanted a re-

vealing, honest interchange of feeling and thoughts that no interview would have been capable of doing". Next the producers were faced with the challenge of making two talking heads interesting for 75 minutes. Executive Producer, Scott Zakarin had the answer, "We wanted to make this show special. Film was too expensive and we didn't like the look of video. That left High Def. Given the film-like qualities of 24P we knew we had a format which would deliver on all levels, creatively, esthetically and financially."

The shoot went off seamlessly and, as the post supervisor, I was amazed at how visually stimulating the

footage was. Next, I turned to APS Los Angeles for advice on post. We sub-mastered the show at 24P then converted it to 1080i for our motion control effects. Having 60 fields instead of 24 frames gave us added flexibility and stability in this realm. How did we do? Leonard Nimoy sums it up, "This is the most personal insight the fans will get into our relationship and into aspects of Bill and myself they've never heard before." ♦

Mind Meld: Secrets Behind the Voyage of a Lifetime is available on VHS (\$19.95) and DVD (\$24.95) from www.williamshatner.com

HDNet: Finally – A National Network Broadcasting All-HD, All the Time

by Sherry Manno Yeaman

When Mark Cuban, owner of the Dallas Mavericks NBA team, and Colorado Studios founder Philip Garvin, launched HDNet in September 2001, a new chapter in the history of HDTV began. HDNet is the only national television network broadcasting 100% of its programming in 1080i HD, and the response from consumers and the industry has been phenomenal.

HDNet, available on DIRECTV® channel 199, broadcasts a regular schedule of live and taped sports, including MLB, NHL, USOC and National Lacrosse League; as well as entertainment including concerts, documentaries, shorts and feature movies. In HDNet's most recent achievement, NBC announced in November that its coverage of the 2002 Olympic Winter Games is being produced in association with HDNet and will be available on NBC's DTV affiliates and on HDNet.

HDNet is a true network, switching between live incoming feeds, short promos and longer taped programs. Since this has never been done before in High Definition on a daily basis, HDNet has developed new and unique systems, including a Master Control that Philip Garvin says is "a technical marvel of MPEG stream splicing (instead of switching) and storage."

With two HD mobile units traveling to events from coast-to-coast, HDNet has had to re-train dozens of camera operators in the fine art of shooting for High Definition. "Since shooting sports in HD is so different from standard TV, the camera operators' instincts for following the ball or the puck have to be replaced by an emphasis on



composition, much less camera movement, and minimal zooms," Garvin said.

HDNet is actively acquiring original content produced in HD or 35mm film to add to its programming

schedule. The company is also exploring the redistribution of content on HD media like D-VHS and HD/DVD. ♦

For more information visit www.hdnet.net or contact Lucia Fraboni, 214-651-1446, lfraboni@hd.net

Peak Experience

by Philip D. Schwartz, D.P.

P *Peak Experience*, an independent feature set at a remote “cat skiing” area in the High Sierras, would prove to be quite challenging on many fronts; not the least of which were the extremes of contrast that I had heard were a major concern in any HD situation.

Preparation and Testing

Anthony Adams (Writer/Producer/Director), Jamie Houssian (Second Unit Assistant Camera) and I flew to Arlington, Virginia and the facilities of Roland House, a major HD post production/rental organization. They were providing two Sony F900 24P Cine Altas, support gear, and complete post-production services. We spent several days learning about the cameras, and shooting tests in Washington D.C. Our tests were then color-corrected in a DaVinci 2K suite, which restored the conservatively-shot images to a full dynamic range of deep, rich blacks and crisp, brilliant highlights.

I realized from our tests that it was more important to “previsualize” the end results created in the DaVinci suite, rather than make too many final lighting/contrast judgments based upon the image on our small (9”) field monitors. It also became readily apparent that I had to expose the images across the F900’s fairly limited dynamic range of approximately five stops (two and one-half stops over 18% middle gray; two and one-half to three under), in order to achieve the look that we were after.

After “filming out” our extensive filter tests, I ultimately chose a Tiffen 1/8 Black Promist in combination with a 1/2 Soft FX, for most of the shoot. On special “flashback” sequences, shot with the 360 degree shutter, I went to either a number 1 or number 2 Soft FX.



At Lost Lake, past loves take on new life for EZ (Mark Collie), Kat (Angel Boris) and Andre (Michael McLafferty)

The Production

We had a very basic tungsten and HMI lighting package, as well as a fairly complete grip package. I lit the project exactly as if I were exposing film, with plenty of contrast (often at a 3:1 or 4:1 ratio), and frequently with colored gels on my lamps for various effects.

I also chose to restrict the depth of field by shooting at T/2- T/2.8. This proved particularly challenging for our day interiors, shot at the magnificent old Tamarack

Lodge. It had very large picture windows facing the snow-covered mountains, and I was shooting with small tungsten and custom photoflood units inside. We had to “gel” these windows with five stops of ND, plus 85, to reduce the outside T/32 exposure (spot meter on the snow) to a more manageable T/5.6.

Exterior exposures and contrast were controlled by extensive use of NDs, grads and polars. Working in deep snow at high altitude further complicated the lighting/



Kat (Angel Boris) is haunted by mysterious visitors at Lost Lake

balance issues, as we had no way to transport and power our HMI's; all "fill light" was provided by reflectors and bounce cards.

The "Assets" and "Liabilities" of 24P

One of the real advantages of 24P was the ability to have small, lightweight cameras in tight practical locations, or up on the mountain in deep snow. Our second unit spent several days photographing the photo-double/athletes as they skied and snowboarded, all the while skiing along with the action. The fifty-minute camera loads were also a real plus.

From a purely economic standpoint, our decision to shoot in 24P was a "no brainer", as we were able to work in an extremely high shooting ratio; an unheard-of luxury in the indie world. Camera set-up times, or conversion from "studio" to "hand-held" mode, also seemed faster when compared to 35mm.

My overall impression of shooting in 24P is highly favorable. With proper preparation and testing, careful attention to lighting, composition and contrast, and subtle filtration, 24P shooting can be an artistically satisfying and economical solution for the most demanding of independent productions. People interested in viewing

selected clips from the film are invited to visit the website: www.peakexperiencethemovie.com. ♦

Philip D. Schwartz is a Los Angeles-based Director of Photography, and has shot more than 100 features, Second Units, shorts, commercials, and music videos. He can be contacted through Ms. Robin Sheldon at (310) 652-8778.

The writer/producers of Peak Experience, Anthony Leigh Adams and Christina Adams, have written and produced many film and television projects for Disney, Universal, NBC and ABC, among others. Anthony has directed a number of his original plays and musicals in London. As a journalist, he writes feature articles for Written By, the magazine of the Writers Guild of America and The Hollywood Reporter.

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