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The Reference Room ∴ Focus on Editing: Jay Ankeney

What Editors Wish For in The New Year

by Jay Ankeney, January 23, 2007

The beginning of a new year is a time to look forward. So for this year's "Editor's Wish List," I was able to harvest some terrific suggestions from a variety of innovative post pros about what they would like someone to come up with to make their post-production workflow easier. Later this spring, system manufacturers at NAB2007 will be telling us how they intend to mold the future of editing. But this month, it's our turn to mount the soapbox.

Leslie Allen is an editor using Adobe Systems software who also owns Cinergy Creative, a full service production and design studio in the Hollywood area creating visual imagery and effects for broadcast, film, and new media. Considering the high cost of renting HD decks for mastering digital projects, he'd like to see an external facility that could handle those record-to-tape and digitize-from-tape chores.

"This would provide smaller facilities with a pseudo machine room on call 'round the clock,' Allen said, "and editors could send in their timeline to the facility over the Internet. That company would then lay the material off onto a chosen tape format and deliver it to clients wherever in the world they may be. Think of the savings on shipping tapes alone!"

Allen would also like someone to come up with a backup process that not only preserves an entire project, but is intelligent enough to individually save the work of each artist involved.

"Sometimes the graphics specialist may get so involved he or she forgets to save their work to a central storage system on a timely basis," he said. "My 'editors wish' would do it for them."

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Up in Canada, Andy Stinton cuts videos on Media 100 at Event Studio in Toronto specializing in staging special events.

"I think the over-sophistication of many edit systems is actually slowing down the workflow," Stinton said. "Let's face it, the vast majority of editing is simple cuts and dissolves, but entry-level prosumer editing approaches can't output to professional media. Too many people are tempted into going with overloaded big name NLEs when they could get along just fine with far simpler systems that would be easier to use. Sort of like the old days of basic machine-to-machine tape editing; give them the ability to create high-quality masters and their lives would be much simpler."

HI-RES PODCASTING

Michael Cioni wears an editors hat among other responsibilities at Plaster City, an Apple-based independent filmmaker's post facility in Los Angeles. He'd like to put high-rez video podcasting on his wish list.

"Lots of productions want to have real-time editorial capabilities on their set, but editors prefer working out of their own bays and many of these NLE jockeys don't like being crammed into hotel rooms near on-site locations," Cioni said. "So we would like to stream dailies to the editor's preferred workroom with iTunes-style organization and get the edited results back to the remote location as fast as possible. A high-resolution video podcast could maintain the production-to-post link in real time."

Paul Nesmith, who is in charge of editing at Pixel Blues in North Hollywood, enjoys using his Autodesk powerhouses, including flame and smoke along with several systems from other manufacturers. But he sees a need for client education to inform producers how to make best use of a new advanced technology capabilities.

"Because of the way software-oriented approaches keep getting cheaper, we need tutorials to teach clients to appreciate the fact that the lowest session charge for equipment may cost more in the end," Nesmith said. "I can do more in one hour on a smoke than could be accomplished in a whole day on a desktop system. So clients could cut their bottom line if they knew how to appreciate the appropriate technology to solve their problems, and manufacturers should constantly be providing DVD tutorials to help them figure it out."