

Cinesite, a Kodak Company, has entered the digital mastering arena. A new service organization will provide feature filmmakers with additional creative flexibility in digital postproduction suites and enhanced image quality on cinema screens.

"We believe digital intermediate is the way of the future for narrative filmmaking," says Fred Franzwa, general manager, Kodak Digital Mastering, Preservation and Restoration Services. "It combines the best of two worlds. The magic of film in its ability to capture and render rich and subtle details in contrast, colors and resolution, is incomparable for image capture and projection. We are providing flexible gateways for digitizing film images for color-timing and look creation, and for recording the intermediate back onto a high-quality color intermediate film as a printing master."

Franzwa notes that the digital intermediate would also provide a single source for releasing motion pictures in all video formats, including HDTV, DTV, DVD and the more conventional television formats used in different areas of the world.

The new service facility is headquartered at the Kodak Hollywood Center, in Los Angeles, where Franzwa has assembled a team, which includes Glenn Kennel and Sarah Priestnall, two of the industry's film-digital convergence technology experts.

Extending the creative flexibility available to filmmakers

"One of our goals is to provide cinematographers, directors and other people involved in the collaborative process of filmmaking with the same creative flexibility they enjoy in the telecine suite when they work on commercials and narrative TV content," says Franzwa. "All elements of the original negative that can be used in the final cut will be digitized using a Philips Spirit DataCine."

Franzwa notes that Kodak earned two Emmys in 1998 for developing and manufacturing the imaging head and other digital technology for the DataCine.

The gateway for transferring the digital master onto film is the Kodak Lightning laser film recorder. Kodak received a plaque from the Academy

'Way of the future' Cinesite enters digital mastering arena

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of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences during the 1999 technical Academy Awards ceremonies for developing the laser film recording technology and bringing it to the marketplace.

"This is the logical step in the evolution of motion picture technology," says Franzwa continuing: "We have assembled the elements of an enabling technology, which will give narrative filmmakers the same artistic options that are available to them when they work on commercials. And they can do this without compromising the integrity of the original image quality on the cinema screen. In fact, we believe it will measurably enhance picture quality in cinemas."

Franzwa points out that the DataCine colorist, in collaboration with the filmmaker, has the ability to dial in selective color corrections or change densities from the head to tail of a single shot, or slightly re-compose the shot by enlarging it a field or two. Many music videos and commercials have been shot in black-and-white and entirely colorized in post to allow total control of the color palette after the shoot.

"Many wonderful tools exist that can make film do things it couldn't do before," says Franzwa. "Until now, these tools weren't accessible to people who were finishing on film. The possibilities are unlimited. For example, we can do shot-to-shot color corrections in real-time, and record a 'pre-timed' master onto color intermediate film. This process could eliminate the trial and error involved in making answer prints, because the color correction decisions can be made interactively. This extends the creative flexibility available to filmmakers."

Images can be sharpened, de-grained, re-grained, and augmented

The Philips Spirit DataCine is format- and resolution-independent. It can be used to convert film images to TV resolution video formats or 2K/data files. Franzwa notes that during this process, images can be sharpened, de-grained, re-grained, and augmented in various other ways formerly reserved for visual effects shots.

Franzwa says that director Gary Ross's 1998 comic fantasy *Pleasantville* set the stage for this next step in the evolution of imaging technology. The film was digitized with most colors desaturated and others augmented, creating a classic black-and-white look. Proprietary software was developed to isolate people and objects and either add or remove color as required by the story.

"It was a great collaborative process," says Franzwa. "Cinesite was responsible for providing the conversion technologies, and Deluxe Labs did a great job with the release prints. We believe future filmmakers will give Gary Ross and his creative team much credit for their vision in seeing how this convergence of film and digital imaging technologies could advance their art form in a way that made good business sense."

For more information about Kodak digital mastering, preservation and restoration services visit the Cinesite website at www.cinesite.com

(The Spirit DataCine is a trademark of the Philips Broadcast Television Systems Company.)