IMPRESSIONS OF ETERNA-RDI

Top Colorist Peter Doyle on Digital Innovation

Reports of the death, or at least terminal ill-health, of film have been exaggerated. Rather than succumb to the onward march of digital innovation, film is adapting to deliver a better image than ever.

Two new Fuji stocks, the **ETERNA-RDI**, which has been designed specifically for use in the digital intermediate process, and the ETERNA-CI for master positives and duplicate negatives, represent this new generation.

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Peter Doyle, a supervising digital colorist who has worked on many major movies including the *Lord Of The Rings* trilogy, Tim Burton's *Charlie & The Chocolate Factory* and *The Golden Compass*, can justly claim to have been there at the birth. Working in digital visual effects 10 years ago he understood then the implications of seeing a digital image recorded onto a negative and then printed.

Biding his time until technology developed and costs came down, Doyle was waiting for the right project to help realize the full potential of this process, and that project was Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring* in 2000, at which point Fujifilm Tokyo became closely involved in developing their new prints stocks.

"Digitally manipulating the imagery there were a few things that the print stock was doing that you typically like it to do when you're printing from a camera neg," Doyle notes, "but which you may not necessarily want if you're coming off a digital neg.

"One of the things that we worked on intensively with Fuji Tokyo's team was building a digital model of the print stocks, color profiling in order to emulate what print stock looks like on the CRT. At the time the digital projectors weren't viable to use as a proofing tool.

"This basically meant that the colors the negative needed to be exposed with more closely matched the colors that the ARRI laser was generating. Typically, when I'm printing in the lab I run with a print alignment of 19, 20 in the blue off but now we're getting in the low 30s, which is fantastic because it means we've got that extra density. This means we can drive the print a little bit harder and along the way we pick up less grain.

"So because the neg intrinsically has a better MTF response, and the increase in contrast gives the perception of greater sharpness, it means that we can really start to play with sharpness as a tool. Just as the DP will choose between their Primos, their ARRIs and their Cookes, we can take that a step further and really work with softness or sharpness to tailor the MTF response of the entire DI chain."

The digital intermediate stock that came out of this extensive round of testing is the Fujicolor **ETERNA-RDI**, which offers fine detail, low grain, expanded latitudes and more accurate color transfer from digital intermediates.

"The key then is in maximizing the quality and integrity of each successive generation of print, being mindful of lifetime.

"You typically strike eight or maybe 10 digital negatives that can then be distributed to the various bulk printing labs around the world, and they then strike prints from that and you have first generation prints around the world.

"For foreign territories and areas that need subtitling or for various reasons may need to go through the interpositive-internegative process, the ETERNA-CI stock retains many of the characteristics of the digital neg and has made the dupe process onto print also quite high quality."

Which is good news all round for filmmakers, technicians and audiences. For whatever the alternatives formats out there, Doyle speaks for everyone who loves film when he says, "a first generation print from a DI is a gorgeous thing." ■ ANWAR BRETT

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