

PIXION: A Visual Factory Par Excellence

Pixion is a fully owned subsidiary of Century Communication Ltd., one of the fastest growing entertainment services companies in India. With more than 300 trained and motivated technicians, and offices in Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai, Pixion is a leader in design, production, post-production and technology services for film and television. Following are excerpts of an interview with two of the team members: colorist Jayadev Tiruveaipati and DI & technical head Neil Sadwelkar.



India

Jayadev Tiruveaipati,
Colorist



Fujifilm recently introduced ETERNA-RDI, a recording film exclusively for the digital intermediate process. What are your impressions of digital image transfer?

I used **ETERNA-RDI** for a recent project, and the DOP is very happy with the rich blacks, the tonal quality of the images, the color reproduction, and of course the sharpness is very good. I would say it produces a 99% match with the digital images, which I had corrected, and appears exactly the same on the final print after the DI process.

Did you notice anything specific about this stock?

Most significant is the rich crisp blacks, which we always fight for, and a clean neat image. The added value is the sharpness along with good contrast.

While transferring to ETERNA-RDI, do you find any color shift or color cross talk in mixed lighting conditions? How do you find its latitude and tonal quality?

I found that the stock handles such situations quite brilliantly; maybe because of the latitude of the emulsion, it reciprocates the spectrum very smoothly. The range of

latitude from highlight areas to shadow portions is amazing, and in daylight where the shift is over five to six stops, it gives you all the details with full clarity.

Any instance where you have stretched the contrast level and the results were still under control?

Yes! The last film I did—*No Smoking*—had many sequences where we had to play with the contrast.

Initially I was a bit apprehensive about how it would turn out in the DI transfer but to my surprise the results were very good.

What is your view in terms of DI transfer from film negative footage vis-à-vis HD format footage?

HD transfer is close to the original colors, but in the end, the prominence of the video look is still quite apparent, maybe the latitude of film negative creates that magic.

Neil Sadwelkar,
DI & Technical Head



Considering the HD format film market, which is still to make an impact in India, do you see a trend where HD originated films will go through the DI process for theatrical release?

We have done a couple of projects shot on HD. One was *Shoonya*, shot on—believe it or not—HDV. Recently we graded an entire feature film entitled *Karma* which was shot on DVCPRO HD. After grading it will go through DI for theatre release on film. In addition to these projects, other recent films of ours include *Rock On*, *Jaane Tu Jaane Na* and *Fashion*. There is growing interest among young filmmakers to know if a film not originated on negative can be transferred on to film for theater release.

The DI process is seen as an expensive proposition for medium or small-budget filmmakers. How would you plan to increase the customer base so that more people can go for DI and release their work in multiplexes?

Yes the DI process is quite expensive when compared to traditional analyzer-based grading. The cost of equipment and setup is very high, and this is bound to be reflected in the service charges to recover the cost.

Though charges have been stable for the last three years, the prospect of a drastic reduction is unrealistic. The customer base has grown, and we are doing a fair amount of DI work for regional films as well.

Sometimes, distributors and exhibitors take up the film if the product looks good, and they feel it would give them a fair amount of business. So they pick up part or all of the cost of DI and the filmmaker's burden is reduced.

An increasing number of filmmakers are using Super 16mm, Super 35mm or 35mm 3perf. These cannot go for direct release, and have to go through DI. But the time required for DI can be drastically reduced if there is planning before grading just as there is pre-planning before going on a shoot. If such planning reduces the time and resources used to do a DI, we can easily charge less, much less.

When something new is introduced it is initially expensive but gradually it comes down in cost. Do you see a similar trend in DI process costs?

Compared to five years ago, we now have computers and software with capacity and speed that enables them to do more complex things faster. And faster systems mean faster turn-arounds.

But we aren't seeing that reduction in time because of a lack of pre-planning. Like I said before, if we can work smarter and hence faster, we can do DI at a fraction of the current cost. ■