



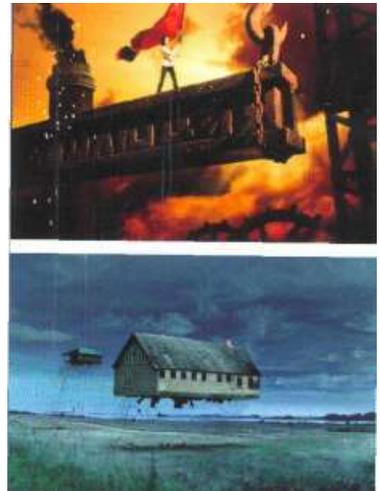
Expectations for agency in-house post-production are changing; ever since Mini Mill suites started appearing it has become part of the big agency spec to have high-end post facilities on site. Agencies have long been pumping out their own mood and pitch films from a couple of Avids in the basement, but now they can conform and finish

WITH THE TREND OF ADVERTISING AGENCIES OPENING HIGH SPEC IN-HOUSE POST-PRODUCTION FACILITIES AND BBH'S RECENT DECISION TO BILL PRODUCTION COMPANIES ONLY UP TO DELIVERY OF RUSHES, ARE WE WITNESSING A RADICAL SHIFT IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGENCIES AND POST-PRODUCTION?

SAM MITCHELL REPORTS

broadcast commercials in smart online suites. "There is definitely a place for post-production facilities in larger agencies that have a huge turnover of work or the joy of numerous foreign adaptations," Julia Methold, head of TV at Wieden + Kennedy, comments. "You can work in the agency, get fast approvals and steam through volumes of work without getting your feet wet." The gains to an agency with a glut of retail

post, present and future



what's in the post?

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campaigns and international versions are obvious. Most jobs of this calibre work to set formulas but also demand regular appraisal from agency personnel - creative teams can spend weeks in facility edit suites. Using Mini Mills and other solutions offered by Soho post houses, agencies are able to cut costs at a time of shrinking budgets and increasing accountability. Suite hire and tape costs are the obvious savings, as well as streamlining operations in very busy departments. There are now some-six Mini Mill suites throughout four London-based agencies while VTR's more complete in-house post facility option, K<Post in



"I'VE BEEN IN POST FOR 15 YEARS, AND EVEN THOUGH IT SEEMS VERY TOPICAL TO BE TALKING ABOUT IT ALL BEING TAKEN AWAY FROM US, THAT'S A CONVERSATION THAT I'VE BEEN HEARING IN ONE WAY, SHAPE OR FORM FOR THE LAST 15 YEARS"

JWT, impressed United (formerly HHCL) so much they asked VTR to manage their in-house needs, the recently opened United Sound and Vision (US&V) being the result. Framestore, meanwhile, has developed an interesting alternative take on the in-house option with its Front online digital studio, which allows the agency to log into the output of a Flame suite while talking to the operator on the phone.

Ant Friend, MD of K<Post and US&V, believes that in-house post facilities serve a greater purpose than saving an agency time and money. "It sells an agency," he says. "We show clients around and they are wowed by K<Post's possibilities." Friend sees such in-house capability as integral to a big agency as the print and press department.

While link-ups with the post-production establishment have been good for agency and post house alike, could facility houses yet fall victim to the success of their new initiatives? With agencies hungry for benefits they see in this new generation of in-house facility, AMV.BBDO and McCann Erickson have decided that it makes even more sense to go it alone. Apple Mac's ever-

improving professional editing software and hardware is reaching a level that can seriously begin to compete with Silicon Graphics, Discreet and Avid's industry standard solutions at a fraction of the price.

With these facilities AMV

and McCann believe they get the same benefits, but without any further revenue loss after the relatively low set-up costs. While post houses claim they can also offer a wealth of know-how, experience and backup, most talk of what competition these moves provide to post houses focuses on issues of talent. Pat Joseph, creative director at The Mill, sums it up: "A diet of just one kind of work is not necessarily what is going to attract the most talented people. An in-house facility is not going to attract the best work. And if it can't attract the best work then it's not

"A DIET OF JUST ONE KIND OF WORK IS NOT NECESSARILY WHAT IS GOING TO ATTRACT THE MOST TALENTED PEOPLE. AN IN-HOUSE FACILITY IS NOT GOING TO ATTRACT THE BEST WORK. AND IF IT CAN'T ATTRACT THE BEST WORK THEN IT'S NOT NECESSARILY GOING TO ATTRACT THE BEST TALENT. AND IF IT DOESN'T ATTRACT THE BEST TALENT THEN..."

necessarily going to attract the best talent. And if it doesn't attract the best talent then..." Joseph's later comment points to a more crucial clue to what the long term may offer: "Obviously what an in-house post facility will do is scoop quite a lot of the lucrative, or should I say, the less heavily discounted bread-and-butter work." Joce Capper, MD of Rushes, goes on to make the point: "From a personal point of view, the more suites installed means more competition and a lowering of rates. That's challenging to cope with in this extremely competitive environment." AMV and McCann are both realistic about their relative abilities to compete with the big names for the big jobs. However, with the fracturing of the traditional TV and cinema advertising markets by new mediums such as mobile phones and the internet, coupled with shrinking advertising budgets, the question might be whether the big names will be able to compete with in-house facilities for the small, less

glamorous but relatively more cost-effective work. The second potentially big shift in the agency post-production equation comes with BBH's recent decision to bill production companies only up to

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delivery of rushes. Where production companies usually carry the costs up to completion of an agency-approved cut, those working with BBH are now no longer in charge of hiring the off-line editor. Frances Royle, head of TV at BBH, explains the reasons for this change in policy. "Of course, there is the cost saving of the production company mark-up, but also it's about control and tailoring the cost and time allocation to individual clients," she says. "As we all know, some clients take longer to approve edits and often further edits/cut-downs are required. In addition, it makes the process a lot more efficient if we deal with editors directly

"FROM A PERSONAL POINT OF VIEW, THE MORE SUITES INSTALLED MEANS MORE COMPETITION AND A LOWERING OF RATES. THAT'S CHALLENGING TO COPE WITH IN THIS EXTREMELY COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT"

instead of the filter process of going through the production company, especially when a director may have moved on to his next job. We're basically mirroring the rest of the post-production process (sound and online) throughout which we're responsible for costing and setting up."

The initial fear for production companies and editors alike has to be whether this could initiate a shift in the UK towards a more American system where the director has less control of the choice of editor and involvement in the post-production process. Royle insists that BBH has absolutely no intentions in that direction, adding: "We don't want to start dictating which editor the director should use, that's up to them - directors' relationships with certain editors are very important."

After an ominous period of silence from production companies, the issue came to a head this month as a boycott of BBH's TV briefs was proposed. Steve Davies, head of the APA, which represents the UK production companies, points out that they are involved in working towards a "standard contract for post-production in commercials with the IPA". Davies is very level-headed about the situation, believing that production companies now have to

make sure that they get properly paid for their involvement in the post-production process. He also goes on to say that it is widely recognised that UK commercials are so strong due to the collaborative

process they have throughout post-production and the value of the directors' input. This feeling is echoed by all agency and post personnel alike. Opinion on this move is wildly varied and though some agencies are expressing the opinion that they might well follow suit there are still reservations. Frank Lieberman, executive head of TV at McCann, sees the loss of production company mark-up as very dangerous for their survival, pointing out that the mark-up isn't all profit, it covers their overheads. Claudio Gorini, deputy head of TV at

"IT MAKES THE PROCESS A LOT MORE EFFICIENT IF WE DEAL WITH EDITORS DIRECTLY INSTEAD OF THE FILTER PROCESS OF GOING THROUGH THE PRODUCTION COMPANY, ESPECIALLY WHEN A DIRECTOR MAY HAVE MOVED ONTO HIS NEXT JOB. WE'RE BASICALLY MIRRORING THE REST OF THE POST-PRODUCTION PROCESS (SOUND AND ONLINE) THROUGHOUT WHICH WE'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR COSTING AND SETTING UP"

RKCR Y&R, worries that edit facilities, squeezed too hard already, will only get squeezed harder as agencies bow to clients and procurement further in a relentless cost-cutting drive.

At the moment it's very much a wait-and-see situation, for none more so than offline facilities, who on the whole felt unable to pass comment, caught very much in the middle. However, Simon Gosling, MD at Cut & Run, is fairly philosophical. "I've been in post-production for 15 years," he muses, "and even though it seems very topical to be talking about the ability for it all being taken away from us, that's a conversation that I've been hearing in one way, shape or form for the last 15 years."

What the BBH initiative might do is to clear up a grey area as to what the expectations for a director's involvement in the post on a job are - some directors have been known to leave for another shoot mid-post, much to the agency's

chagrin, while it is not uncommon for agencies to make changes to the cuts without consulting with the director. Where exactly directors may go to attend the post, if agencies are in full control of the post budgets with cutting-edge, cost-efficient in-house facilities, we shall have to wait and see on that one, too.

what's in the post?



WHAT'S ON
THE HORIZON
FOR POST-
PRODUCTION?
WHERE IS
THE INDUSTRY
HEADING AND
HOW IS IT
GOING TO GET
THERE? SHOTS
GARNERED THE
OPINION OF
A HOST OF
POST EXPERTS..

STO.PP STOCKHOLM

Pasi Johansson
Managing Director

sto.pp is preparing for the creative change in Swedish advertising that is set to happen in 2006. In the last few years, Scandinavian agencies have focused on getting ads done on an increasingly tight budget and, consequently, creativity has taken second place.

Although the budgets are not increasing, the tide has, to a certain degree, turned and the focus is back on creativity and getting Sweden back at the forefront of international advertising. Agencies are taking control of the creative post-production budgets and are looking for a one-stop shop. To satisfy this demand, we have created a truly full-service facility by setting up Sweden's only 24/7 film lab and expanding our other services. Working directly with the agencies means we often see the script and get involved at a much earlier stage.

As a result, we are creating more pre-visualisation which gives the creatives a much more realistic idea of the possibilities. This development has also made us expand our 3D department where we use software to create virtual studio sets, camera, cars etc. 3D is totally changing the way we work today with bigger projects.

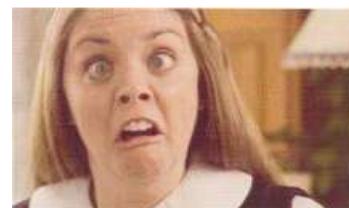


POST MILLENNIUM NEW YORK

Nathan Byrne
Senior Editor/Partner

At Post Millennium we are getting ready to move downtown and build a new, larger facility from scratch. As an edit house, the big question we are asking ourselves is: are we going to continue with Avid? The other option is, of course, Final Cut.

The impact of this decision will affect our entire creative process. If we choose to swap to Final Cut, we will surely find ourselves spending more time executing graphics within the editorial process. This is because graphic software integration is



significantly better with Final Cut. If we stay on with Avid, we will probably invest in Avid DS or Flame and hire an artist for that function. The other advantage of Final Cut is the huge number of new companion applications to be learned and adopted. For example, Shake and Motion. This process will keep us mentally active and hopefully allow us to create a more satisfying result.

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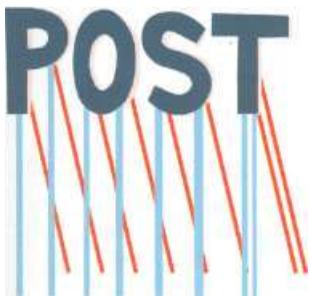
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NORDISK FILM SHORTCUT COPENHAGEN

Nordisk Film Shortcut is one of the most modern and advanced post houses in Scandinavia. Working with Autodesk on its latest equipment, the Lustre Incinerator, has helped develop new ways of making commercials/feature films, shaping the future in post-production.

The Lustre Incinerator offers more creative freedom and flexibility. The simplicity of the Lustre system enables the colourist to work on 16 scenes at the same time, in real-time, in multiple layers, in hi-res with no rendering. And effects are exported straight to Lustre and viewed on 2K projector while grading. There is no more doing two passes, which is extremely time consuming, and the broader range of light and dark enables the colourist to work on several problems at the same time. The quality is improved and the client gets more efficient grading time. Easy and quick communication between Autodesk's Discreet equipment (Flame/Inferno) has given Shortcut a new level of interactivity.



MARSHALL STREET EDITORS LONDON

John Mayes
Owner/Editor

A couple of things are changing the way we cut commercials, like portability and how we move media around. We already cut almost anywhere: on location, in the studio or steaming down the Nile on a boat - moving rushes from the laptop edit system to the main edit suite is now all part of the job.

The next step is how we get rushes from the lab, and how we deliver the final cut to the client and post facilities. Traditionally, the rushes would be delivered on Beta SP tape. Soon, files will be transferred straight from the lab into the edit suit - saving on tape, dubs and the all-important loading time.

We have already done jobs where no copies were made on tape. All approvals were done through our website, first as lo-res copies then as hi-res for client viewing. The final cut was then transferred to the post house for Telecine and finishing.

At this end of the business it's always going to be about the people who are doing the cutting. The way we cut, and what we cut on, all depends on providing flexibility and accommodating client needs.



METROVISION BUENOS AIRES

We think that the two most important changes in technology that are still being developed and updated are the change in the aspect ratio for broadcast TV, from 4:3 to 16:9, and the way we are and will be storing our finished material, from tapes to data. Besides, we believe that no matter how big the gap from the existing technology to the following might be, talent is the most important thing in our business. That's what makes the big difference in creativity. Technology is important and helps working more efficiently. But there is not such a big thing to come that couldn't be solved by a great artist regardless of the equipment he or she is sitting at. We think that research about new technologies should continue to help talent create great spots.

"THE SIMPLICITY OF THE LUSTRE SYSTEM ENABLES THE COLOURIST TO WORK ON 16 SCENES AT THE SAME TIME, IN REAL-TIME, IN MULTIPLE LAYERS, IN HI-RES WITH NO RENDERING. AND EFFECTS ARE EXPORTED STRAIGHT TO LUSTRE AND VIEWED ON 2K PROJECTOR WHILE GRADING"



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THE MILL LONDON

Wendy Bleazard
PR & Marketing Manager

In recent months The Mill has pioneered a new way of working on commercials - by bringing 'movie best practice' to our commercials clients. Transferring film to digital files or data allows us to work with even better quality images in a more flexible work flow. These high-quality digital files are assembled (onlined) as a coherent commercial at broadcast resolution in our client suites. Our new Data Grading suite is the first dedicated non-linear Telecine suite for commercials in London. The main advantage of 'data' is that it is higher quality and allows us to grade a full commercial at full resolution in sequence and not shot by shot from different rolls of film. This pipeline is generally used on feature film projects and we have used the experience we gained working on feature films like Black Hawk Down and Gladiator to push the quality of our commercials as far as possible. Traditionally, one would have to look at each piece of film negative individually, but this creative development transforms the way we work - allowing each shot to be viewed in context of the complete commercial. It ultimately offers greater creative freedom to creatives, directors and colourists alike.



DUCKLING COPENHAGEN

Jonas Drehn
Visual Effect Supervisor

Here at Duckling we strongly believe that post-production isn't only about post. Our finest task is to guide directors and creatives to the best solution - even if it requires less or no post. Coming from Denmark, with a small population and tiny budgets, we are forced to think this way. And the way the world is moving these days, with more internet-based content, this becomes even more important. We have recently completed VFX on international web-based campaigns for Nike and think it's very powerful to combine our creative thinking with great creative ideas to get interesting results - even on limited budgets. I feel that the more production and post can complement each other the better. A tool we therefore use a lot is pre-viz. Being able to see what you are trying to achieve before going on shoot is really a great advantage for director, creatives and clients.



"A TOOL WE USE A LOT IS PRE-VIZ. BEING ABLE TO SEE WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE BEFORE GOING ON SHOOT IS REALLY A GREAT ADVANTAGE FOR DIRECTOR, CREATIVES AND CLIENTS"

QUANTEL

Mark Morton
Marketing Manager

You shoot on 35mm film, lighting it beautifully with great set design, talent, make-up, hair... the works. You spend more processing it, then lovingly colour correct it on Telecine. Then tip the lot down the pan by posting it in SD. To be precise, reducing quality by a factor of up to 48 times. You then watch the compositor struggling to pull keys, you re-colour correct various shots that need tweaking, then worry about re-framing shots without them going soft. And when you up-res it for the cinema - ouch! Quantel and our users are on a mission to end this madness now. Your glorious work up-front can look glorious on-screen, too, with minimal extra investment or time. How? Simply by adopting the Digital Intermediate workflow now widely used in movie post-production. Scan or Telecine the rushes to HD, 2K or 4K and work at this resolution throughout post-production, colour correcting in-context as the job goes along, with a final pass at the end of the post process. With the new generation of technology, there's practically no time or cost penalty to doing this, and your commercial will quite simply look much better on both the TV and cinema screen.



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"IN A WORLD WHERE PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY ARE WORDS LOADED WITH NEGATIVE CONNOTATION, IT'S ACTUALLY TRUE THAT ONLY EFFICIENCY CAN CREATE THE TIME NEEDED FOR CREATIVITY"

AVID

Miguel Ferros
European Market Manager - Post

Whether in high-end effects and compositing or creative editorial editing, the situation is the same: 80 per cent of the development to provide the tools necessary for the job has already been done. That's not to suggest that the remaining 20 per cent of development isn't worth doing. But it is true that the effort and cost required to deliver the tools also make them financially unviable at a time when the trend is towards commoditisation and lower-cost platforms and software. So where is the R&D going? There is a simple equation that is also a constant. Greater efficiency = greater creativity. In a world where productivity and efficiency are words loaded with negative connotation, it's actually true that only efficiency can create the time needed for creativity. So Avid focuses on collaborative workflow, creating workflows that reflect the nature of production. You might call it non-linear production.



BLUEROCK NEW YORK

Joanne Ferraro
Executive VP

As we move forward into the future, technology will allow for more and more data to be transmitted any time, anywhere. Editors at post houses will be in constant communication with their clients, as per usual, but it will be through wireless, 'remote-controlled' means. In addition, the introduction of sophisticated storage devices such as HD DVD, Blu-ray DVD and HVD (Holographic Versatile Disc) will change the way we save information. With a terabyte of memory on one HVD you could have an entire Avid job right in your pocket.

That said, with the advent of new technology, we need to remember that the best work comes from the most artistically inclined, innovative minds. And, most importantly, minds that are able to effectively harness all of the new technology to communicate the vision in a rapidly changing multi-media environment. Expectations for an editor will continue to grow, and more than ever before we will see the truly creative talents rise to the top.



ADOBE

Kevan O'Brien
Post-production Specialist

Adobe Production Studio included many industry-requested features, and it is by listening to our creative users that innovation within Adobe takes place. One such industry requirement was for a simple way of being able to send videos out to clients for approval and having a simple way of collating responses back to the editor in an efficient manner not involving Post-it Notes wrapped around the tape with an elastic band. The Adobe solution to this problem is Clip Notes where you can export a video clip directly from the Premiere sequence embedded into a PDF document that can be commented on frame-accurately. This commenting is done with the free Acrobat reader - so there is no cost to the user - and to send the comments back is a simple text file that has the comments imported back to the Premiere sequence with frame accuracy. With the inclusion of Flash within the Adobe toolset, it won't be long before greater integration takes place with the Production Studio beyond the ability to export straight from Premiere and After Effects.

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"THE BEST WORK COMES FROM THE MOST ARTISTICALLY INCLINED, INNOVATIVE MINDS. AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, MINDS THAT ARE ABLE TO EFFECTIVELY HARNESS ALL OF THE NEW TECHNOLOGY TO COMMUNICATE THE VISION IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING MULTI-MEDIA ENVIRONMENT"



VTR LONDON

Alex Aarons
Managing Director

The world of advertising is changing and post-production companies, along with agencies and production houses, need to gear up for that change. We've seen a radical shake-up of late where terrestrial TV has gone from leading the commercials market, to the focus being on captive audience networks, where TV screens are strategically placed to communicate with specific audiences. Different mediums for delivery such as the launch of digital channels, supermarket TV, mobile TV, the internet and TV on trains... mean that advertisers can be much more targeted in their approach. Post-production houses need to stay ahead of the game and shift their business models in line with their clients' needs. Rather than delivering the traditional service of providing operators and suites for editing and effects, post houses should be creative partners with the capacity and expertise to ingest, manipulate and repurpose their clients' content, whatever the delivery medium.



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AUTODESK MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT

Patrick Jocelyn
EMEA Director

Digital grading has been widely adopted in the film industry but has yet to achieve prominence in the commercials sector.

However, it has huge potential due to the flexibility, creativity and economy it offers.

Digital grading offers far greater creative control than traditional linear systems - in contrast to restrictive 'windows' and simple shapes, a well-designed digital solution may offer freeform masks, combined with keys and tracking tools to give more precise isolations. It can also offer an increasing range of plugins such as blurs, filters and emulations of photochemical processes, previously only available in an effects or compositing suite. Used together, these tools empower virtual lighting and virtual cinematography, allowing the DP to continue being creative after the film is in the can.

Furthermore, as creative decisions are stored as metadata rather than committed to the image, the process is non-destructive. Innovative facilities like Shortcut in Denmark have already invested in such technology, recognising the competitive edge and creative freedom digital grading offers the commercials house.



MPC LONDON

Jim Radford, Creative Head of 3D Commercials and TV

ALICE As soon as we saw the storyboard for Tetley's Fancy Dress we knew that MPC's ALICE system would be the best tool to create the army, as it delivers the highest-quality crowd imagery around. Allowing large numbers of virtual characters to interact, ALICE couples motion-capture with artificial intelligence, giving individual agents their own unique behaviour. For Tetley's, we shot roughly 100 extras, created photo-real CG soldiers and then tracked 1,000s of them into the backgrounds. Initially developed for Troy, ALICE was enhanced for Kingdom of Heaven.

PAPI So-called 'hard-body' simulators - that is, simulating how solid objects realistically interact within a scene (bouncing, colliding, breaking etc) - have been around for a while, but what gives PAPI the edge is its speed and flexibility. More impressive scenes can be imagined without extending deadlines, and simulations of different kinds, such as ALICE, can co-exist with PAPI, meaning that CG characters can interact with their environment, as well as with each other.

FLOWLINE MPC is currently developing 'Flowline', (in conjunction with Scanline in Munich) - a new fluid simulation tool which will create realistic liquids, flames and smoke.



"ALLOWING LARGE NUMBERS OF VIRTUAL CHARACTERS TO INTERACT, ALICE COUPLES MOTION-CAPTURE WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, GIVING INDIVIDUAL AGENTS THEIR OWN UNIQUE BEHAVIOUR"



SWISS INTERNATIONAL STOCKHOLM

Erik Holmedal
Creative Director

Research and development in post has turned into an era of integration of open systems in a collaborative environment. Instead of sitting at a \$1m machine with one operator and local storage, the future lies within collaboration in a SAN environment with high-speed access to shared storage, which increases the iterations of producing creative material as well as shortening the time to finished film. Having one operator in one \$10,000 system with distributed rendering access to a cluster of standard servers, the processing is much faster, the costs are lower and the development phase of desktop computing is tenfold that of mainframe development. Democratizing the tools being used in post is making creativity the main competitive factor. For instance, Swiss produced the digital effects for the global Boss Skin campaign in Adobe After Effects, instead of using Inferno or Fire which would have been the tradition.

