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MODERN EDITING: WHAT MATTERS, WHAT DOESN'T

EXPERTS OFFER THEIR VIEWS ON NLE ESSENTIALS.

BY JAMES CARELESS

The move from SD to HD video is just one of the major challenges that video editors have faced in the past few years. Audio has gone from two-channel stereo to 5.1 surround, and all kinds of new applications and products have pushed the envelope of editor knowledge. No longer can a veteran videotape editor fake his way through: *There's just too much to know!*

Above, from left: Donald Loftin of Loftin Productions and Fritz Feick of Aftershock Digital.

Of course, not every technological innovation pans out. Some catch on, while others never do. This is why *DV* has asked an array of experienced video editors and post house execs which modern editing skills have proven themselves to be must-haves... and which have proven to be nothing but flashes in the pan.

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AFTERSHOCK DIGITAL: DIVE INTO NEW TECHNOLOGY

Hollywood's Aftershock Digital started with three Avid NLEs; now it has five Final Cut Pro HD suites. The company, which edits features, television programs and commercials, is also equipped to edit RED and 4K/2K video, and handle color correction and 5.1 audio mixing.

When it comes to new equipment, Aftershock Digital owner Fritz Feick is definitely an early adopter. In fact, he sees the willingness to take risks on new formats as a key to his success. "Allow yourself to embrace the newest technologies, the newest software," he advises. "The guys I like to work with — in terms of assistants or other editors — they may not have a clue what to do when they first start out. But if they throw themselves at it, read a manual and apply themselves, they can do anything."

As for must-have new skills? Although Feick agrees that it is necessary to master the manuals, he says the real imperative is to connect your inner talents with whatever technology you're using, old or new. "I wouldn't exactly say that you need to learn new skills as much as learn to use and apply the devices that bring your skills to life," he explains. "When you're creating, you use the tools you can. If all you've got is a pencil, you'd better, at the very least, keep it sharp. The same is true for edit systems."

That said, Fritz Feick is more than happy to try out whatever's new and cutting-edge. "I love the changes in codecs and improvements in hardware and software that have occurred over the years,"

he says. "I have met many editors reluctant to change, reluctant to embrace what is new. Get over it."

On a larger scale, Feick argues that new technology enhances the creativity of those editors who embrace it: "I cut thousands of spots on a cheap 19" \$99 TV set. Now I've got a bitchin' Flanders Scientific monitor that clocks in at around \$5K. Guess which looks better? Does it affect the work? You bet it does, because the color is now sensational, and you've got everything at your fingertips to change it to just the way you like it. Now I look forward to doing more high-end visual effects work in-house, and burning Blu-ray print masters with 7.1 surround sound."

Feick's only pet peeve? "Everyone is an E D I T O R," he declares, taking care to stress the necessity of using capital, spaced letters in print to make his point. In other words, people think that the ability to slap clips together in sequential order is all an editor needs to do. Feick finds this attitude frustrating. He sees video editing as storytelling, and "good storytelling is a gift. It's something that can be learned, but, basically, you have it or you don't. If you can't tell a story around a campfire, then maybe editing isn't for you. Or at least you better have some intriguing music and some clever fire SFX if you want to keep an audience's interest."

LOFTIN PRODUCTIONS: HD? SI. 5.1? NO.

New York City's Loftin Productions has spent a considerable amount of money in recent years to keep up with technology trends. Specifically, "We upgraded all our video monitors to LED monitors and we also upgraded our computers to new Mac Pros and the MacBook Pro," says Donald Loftin, the company's videographer and

production manager. To keep up with customer demand, Loftin Productions' editors have learned how to execute multi-camera HD and SD editing in FCP. They have also become regular users of Adobe After Effects, LiveType, Apple's Motion and DVD Studio Pro.

In the same time period, the company upgraded its audio production facility. Today, Loftin Productions is equipped with the new MOTU Digital Performer audio production software and MOTU MachFive digital sampling plug-ins, "along with many other plug-in tools that other studios don't have in their workstations," Loftin says. "Again, the staff have had to upgrade their skills to work in this new audio environment."

What new editing skills have proven not to be worth the effort? "5.1 surround sound mixing with our surround sound system" Loftin replies. "Unlike HD, there's just not much demand for it."

As for the future? Loftin expects his company to be ready to edit 3D footage, holograms and new Web formats, with 2D footage taking more of a backseat. As for audio advances: Given their experience with 5.1, Loftin Productions will probably hold off on making any more changes for a while.

WEST POST DIGITAL: TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT CUSTOMERS WANT NOW

West Post Digital of Santa Monica, California, offers the latest in non-linear editing services using Avid Adrenaline, DS and Symphony Nitris, Autodesk Flame and Final Cut Pro. Yet even with upgrades to full HD post and color correction, company CEO Todd Brown admits that he finds himself a bit baffled by the rapidly changing needs of today's video customers. "Rather than having to keep up with their increas-

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