

Park Road Post Production Sees Red

Harriet McGregor, Park Road

Located in Wellington, New Zealand, Park Road Post Production has been developed by Academy Award® winning director Peter Jackson for filmmakers. A one stop shop for post production, Park Road boasts a sound facility that's been responsible for two Academy Awards, a Kodak IMAGECARE accredited laboratory and is considered the most experienced Digital Intermediate house in Australasia.

The DI department houses two Quantel 4K Pablo suites with TrueLight colour management. The dedicated grading theatre has a Neo panel as well as a six-meter screen with film and video projection, assuring perfect match for film and video outputs.

New Zealanders have long been admired for their ingenuity - its little wonder the Kiwi's are now paving the way when it comes to handling RED footage. Park Road, has been working with RED Digital Cinema Corporation from the start. The RED One™ is a digital "direct to data" cine camera that has a price point that is making high-resolution digital cinematography accessible to many productions. The camera records progressively-scanned footage in 4K, 3K, and 2K resolutions, in either 16:9 or 2:1 aspect ratios.

Peter Jackson was the first filmmaker to put RED through its paces back in March 2007. Company founder Jim Jannard flew out two camera prototypes, affectionately named "Boris" and "Natasha".

In the time it took to get from California to New Zealand, Jackson had assembled a small army, who over the next fortnight, prepped, shot and finished the short film *Crossing the Line*. When the results were screened at NAB on a 4K Sony SXRD projector they caused a sensation with many

talking of having seen industry history in the making. The wave of disruptive IT-based technology sweeping the media industry had reached the cameras.

This was how, over the course of just five days, Park Road became the first post production facility in the world to finish a film shot on RED. Working with very high resolution digital images, on disparate systems, and transcoding between different codecs can be very processor intensive. When they developed the workflow they began from a blank page, they had no templates or models to work from.

"We literally set the benchmark – and we haven't slowed down since. In the 22 months since *Crossing the Line*, RED technology has developed in leaps and bounds. We've been working closely with RED. Jim, Ted and the team have been out to see us on several occasions – each visit sees more creative solutions being developed" says Aimee McCammon, Park Road's General Manager.

"Park Road is a RED beta testing site which means we are at the forefront of the new RED software developments. We've been able to carry out research, run tests all the way through to film out and develop infrastructure that's put us ahead of the curve."

Managing the red one's 'camera neg'

Park Road is currently working on the first large budget feature shot exclusively on the RED One Digital Cinema Camera. The sheer scale of the exercise has proved a welcome challenge for staff at Park Road.

The RED system has completely dispensed with film and videotape, instead recording digital files directly to a hard drive. While eliminating the cost of film or videotape stock is an obvious benefit, care must be taken to ensure that the digital files are properly handled and archived.



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FUTURE VIEWING



“Our large SAN (Storage Area Network), which is part of the fabric tying together various departments here at Park Road, alongside our ability to ingest and visually QC the RED data from location was essential for the production’s peace of mind. In a digitally originated world this data is the same as original camera negative – and we treat that media with just the same respect as if it was being processed in our on-site laboratory” says Phil Oatley, Park Road’s Head of Technology.

Data from location was checked and archived, involving the aggregation of on-set script/continuity information. This required continual dialogue with the crew during the filming. Park Road created an extensive media database including information critical to the on-lining of the RED data in Park Road’s 4k Pablo suites.

It’s all about seamless workflow

“Perhaps the most difficult part of the RED workflow is getting efficiently from the off-line editorial to the online and into DI.” says Oatley. “Park Road has this amazingly tight loop involving careful colour management, all designed to ensure that the creative vision of a production is helped, not hindered, by the technology. Basically we want to have a director, producer, or DOP seated in our grading theatre watching a perfect 2K projection and working with our colourists as comfortably as they do when the media is originated on 35mm or any other digital acquisition method”.

The right tools for the job

To achieve that vision this post production house has built a custom suite of software and hardware tools.

“Ultimately it’s about ensuring that the images, sound, service and final film out (or other deliverables) is of the absolute highest caliber” says Anthony Pratt, the DI RED Workflow Supervisor who has poured through every second of RED footage received.

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“We have not only developed the custom database, archiving, backup and QC processes, but also some great methodologies for feeding the conform process so that our clients experience a seamless workflow. It’s a difficult call when the goalposts are constantly moving – RED themselves jokingly note that *‘everything in life changes... including our camera specs and delivery dates...’* – and we relish that challenge. We have great support including access to their SDK programme, and frequent contact with the RED team – both virtually and in the flesh”.

Ted Schilowitz from RED Digital Cinema says, “Park Road’s willingness to dive in head first into new technology and new workflows without fear is unparalleled. Since the very early days of RED, posting Peter Jackson’s *Crossing the Line* in 4k, to the RED feature film and commercial work they are providing Post and DI services for on a daily basis now, Park Road is without a doubt one of the leaders of the pack.”