

This /s Rocket Science

FOCUS ON EDITING - By Jay Ankeney

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Alan Surgi does his editing by the rocket's red glare at Vandenberg Air Force Base. Surgi serves as an audiovisualist for Lockheed Martin, using a United Media On-Line Express nonlinear edit system to cut together an ongoing series of projects documenting the day-to-day activity of all the Lockheed Martin technical operations.

Although this can include creating a visual record of everything from moving spacecraft payloads from facility to facility, using the company's Space Cargo Transportation System, and through the air on giant C-5 transport planes, one of his most exciting challenges is to create videos highlighting from beginning to end the launch cycle of rockets boosting payloads into orbit.

Located in California's picturesque central coast, the military facility started as Camp Cooke in 1941 to train Army recruits for World War II combat but was transformed into the nation's first space and ballistic missile operations base in 1957, when it was re-christened Vandenberg Air Force Base.

NO SECRETS

Alan is not able to reveal too many specifics about the projects he works on, because you need security authorization just to get into his edit bay. But he has no secrets about why he chose United Media's On-Line Express as the NLE he needed to advance his video productions into the digital era.

"The biggest reason I'm glad to have the On-Line Express system is its multi-camera editing capability," Alan tells us. "Using its FireWire input option, it's very easy to digitize shots from our Sony DVR-1000 playback deck into a bin in the On-Line Express. Once I sync them up on the timeline, using either a visual reference, clapper slate or timecode, I can then make cuts, dissolves between up to four isolated sources by either clicking on the mouse or punching they keys numbered 1 through 4 on the keyboard. This feature gives me a whole new level of post-production capability."

One of the most interesting projects Alan is currently working on covers NASA's transportation of the Chandra X-Ray telescope (named in honor of the late Indian-American Nobel laureate, Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar) from TRW's West Coast manufacturing site to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida for a launch. "This mini-documentary will show future customers the capability of the Space Cargo Transportation System," Alan explains.

"The DV material is transferred to the hard drive connected to our On-Line Express and put into an AVI file using 2.5:1 or 3:1 compression ratios. It lends our productions a very professional look."

NEW TERRITORY

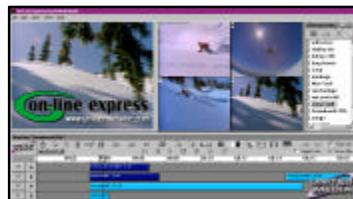
A recent innovation Alan Surgi has tackled is distributing projects on CD-Rs, burned directly



Alan Surgi, an audiovisualist for Lockheed Martin, is currently working a project that covers NASA's transportation of the Chandra X-Ray Telescope.

from his On-Line Express. "This gets me into applications such as After Effects and Media Cleaner Pro, which is kind of new territory for me. But it lets our end-users easily access a visual record of what Lockheed Martin Technical Operations is doing at Vandenberg. It's just one more example of the flexibility the On-Line Express system give us."

Another nifty trick On-Line Express offers is the Auto Storyboard feature, which allows users to simply click on a succession of clips in the desired order to drop them on the timeline. The system can even be set to automatically insert pre-set transitions or effects such as dissolves or fades between the clips. That way, once the material has been digitized into the system, the user can output a photo montage-style rough-cut assembly of a project in about the time it takes to describe it.



United Media's On-Line Express now supports multicamera editing.

On-Line Express provides four video tracks (soon to

be unlimited), 4 in/4 out balanced/unbalanced audio tracks with visible VU meters, and the waveform displayed on the timeline, and supports 16:9 editing. Its 2D DVE effects and transitions on each video stream are all real time as is its luma- and chroma-keying, so no rendering delays the editing process.

MATROX DIGISUITE

Running on Windows NT and powered by On-Line Express editing software, the family of On-Line Express realtime digital editors are all based on Matrox DigiSuite digital video boards. At the Vandenberg Air Force Base, Alan Surgi uses the model incorporating the uncompressed Matrox DigiSuite board, but here are also versions using the 1.3:1 compressed video (510 kB/frame) Matrox DigiSuite LE card and other On-Line Express systems using the DigiSuite DTV board, which empowers DVCPRO25 and DVCPRO50 editing in its native format. It can also use the stripped-down model Matrox DigiSuite LX card, just announced at IBC in Amsterdam, that is limited to DVCPRO25 applications.

Both the DigiSuite DTV and LX offerings can directly render out MPEG2 files for DVD authoring. The system supports dual-monitor editing displays along with an NTSC picture monitor, thanks to Matrox DigiDesktop or G450 VGA boards. As you would expect, it also supports many third-party plug-ins, including Inscrubber, Boris FX, Hollywood FX, Ultimatte, Film FX, SpiceMaster and Sound Forge.

United Media has made a competitive name for itself by offering innovative edit systems to several generators of editors.

Now that it supports multi-camera editing, On-Line Express can bring impressively sophisticated post-production capabilities to a much wider community of editors. 📺

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