

# FINDING THE RIGHT LOOK

**KODAK Look Manager System (KLMS) was designed to enable cinematographers to efficiently previsualize “looks” by manipulating nuances in colors and contrast, and communicate their intentions with everyone involved in the collaborative process of creating the film from pre-production through post. During the past three years, many cinematographers have found innovative ways to use this tool.**



Gabriel Beristain, ASC, BSC has used KLMS on four feature films, *The Ring Two*, *The Shaggy Dog*, *The Sentinel* and *The Invisible*. “I used to take Polaroid pictures of individual set-ups,” he recalls. “With the onset of digital technology for post-production and dailies, I needed a new way to communicate. The most elaborate verbal explanations and references are no substitute for having digital still images that you can manipulate to indicate your intentions, so the dailies timer and everyone else sees exactly what you are trying to achieve. The KODAK Look Manager System is a fantastic tool.”

The software-based system allows cinematographers to experiment with different looks during pre-production. They can simulate multiple combinations of Kodak films, in-camera effects, lighting techniques, gels, filters, and lab processes. After the cinematographer locks into a “look,” an exportable file is used to communicate their intentions to other individuals, who can reference them on different display devices. The latest version of KLMS also incorporates 3-D Look-up Tables (LUTs) utilizing Kodak color science technology, which results in more accurate communications between cinematographers, labs and other post-production facilities.

## The genesis of a new color management tool

Beristain began using digital stills for previsualization on *Blade II*, followed by *S.W.A.T.* and *Blade: Trinity*. He also timed parts of *Blade II* and all of *S.W.A.T.* in digital intermediate (DI) environments. That is when Beristain realized he needed more accurate communications with DI timers and other people involved in post-production.

On *The Ring Two*, Beristain showed the KLMS system to the producers and explained the importance of having a preview technician take the photos and assist with manipulating the images and communicating with the dailies timer.

“The visual effects company was enthusiastic about using the tool to get seamless cuts with the effects shots,” he recalls. “They could see the benefits of having everyone on common ground, so there wouldn’t be disparities. I was able to start unifying the language used to describe the intended look of the film.”

Beristain notes that some of the early challenges with using a preview system included monitor calibration, compression of image data, and the time it took to get through the learning curve. He says the compression problem was resolved by using hard drives instead of CDs. Kodak also introduced KODAK Display Manager (KDM), which automatically calibrates various electronic display devices to accurately represent the look of print film. The system ensures that collaborators working on motion picture film projects are consistently seeing identical images regardless of the equipment used.

Beristain says the dailies were “fantastic” when he used KLMS during production of *The Ring Two* and *The Sentinel*. He credits his preview technicians on those films, Jeremiah Kent and Max Armstrong respectively, with learning the system and getting it to work smoothly.

“My dailies on *The Sentinel* were absolutely exquisite thanks to the preview system,” he says. “They reflected the look that the director and I wanted.”

## Speaking the same language

Beristain used KLMS to overcome some difficulties on the 50-day shoot of his upcoming film *The Invisible*. The story focuses on two young teens whose real selves are invisible to others, one due to his untimely death and the other due to the neglect she's endured since the death of her mother.

"We had to work quickly because it was a relatively low-budget film, and we had variable weather that resulted in some re-shoots and splinter units," Beristain explains. "It was very reassuring to know that the second unit knew exactly what look I was trying to achieve. They matched everything beautifully."

"Lighting was also difficult on this film," he adds. "We relied on natural light for a big forest scene. Exteriors can be so capricious. We had to match and intercut shots

filmed at different times of the day in different light, even night for day. I was also able to show the director exactly what I meant when I said things like, 'This night scene should have a golden sodium vapor look.' I no longer get blank stares when I am trying to reference an idea for a look."

With Beristain's guidance, Armstrong would take digital stills of sets when they were fully lit, import them into the system, manipulate the images, and then distribute them to collaborators. KLMS allowed him to store final, timed images that represented each scene.

"On *The Invisible*, I had to go to Washington D.C. I brought Max (Armstrong) with me because it was going to be very important to communicate with the timer in the States," Beristain says. "There is a scene in the film that cuts from one street in Georgetown to a street in Toronto as the actor turns a corner. It was very important

to maintain continuity between the shots in Canada that were timed at a lab there with the shots in D.C. that were timed at a lab in New York. I wanted them to match so the director could put the sequence together smoothly."

Beristain fine tuned the look for *The Invisible* in DI.

"We gave every emotion its own look," he says. "That's the beautiful thing about DI - you can play with contrast to enhance the different emotions in a film. We were very faithful to that process from production through post and think it pays off."

Beristain says that the DI took approximately three weeks, and since the dailies were already so close to the final look from timing the film as he went along with KLMS, it was a simple process.

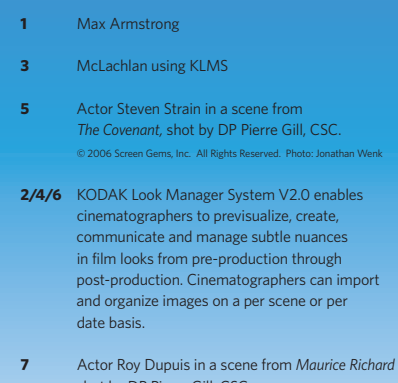
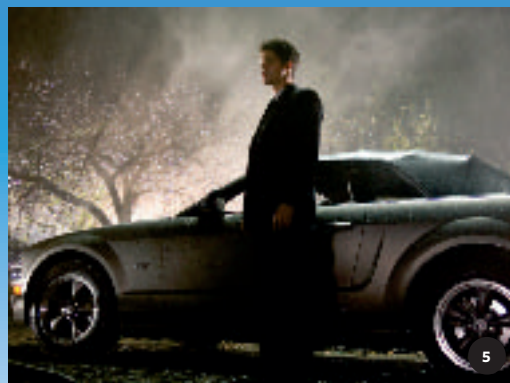
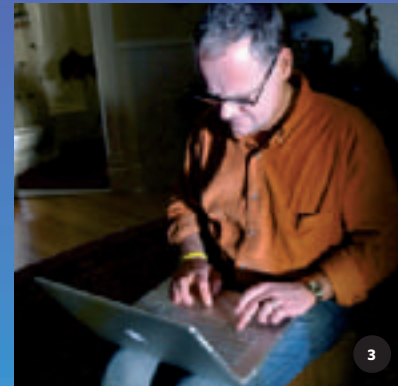
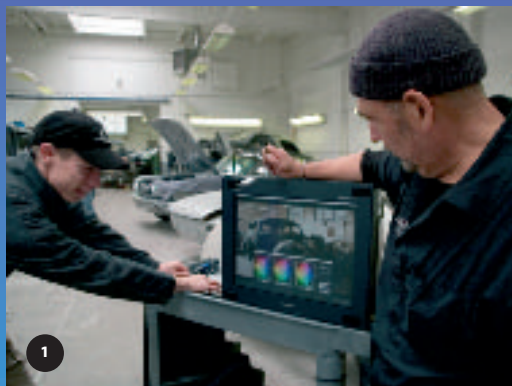
Beristain concludes that the ability to integrate image manipulation into the cinematographer's toolbox is by no means

a substitute for lighting. "It's a wonderful, marvelous tool for a cinematographer, but the nuances of the images should always be on your exposure," he says. "Everything on the negative should reflect as closely as possible the final look."

## Communicating with collaborators

Rob McLachlan, ASC, CSC used KLMS during production of the feature films *Cheating Death: Final Destination 3* and *Black Christmas*.

He initially experimented with KLMS to create a visual palette for *Cheating Death: Final Destination 3* early during pre-production planning. McLachlan used the system to simulate looks that he intended to create with different emulsions and in-camera effects, including lighting, gels and filters, and with post-production



- 1 Max Armstrong
- 3 McLachlan using KLMS
- 5 Actor Steven Strain in a scene from *The Covenant*, shot by DP Pierre Gill, CSC.  
© 2006 Screen Gems, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Photo: Jonathan Wenk
- 2/4/6 KODAK Look Manager System V2.0 enables cinematographers to previsualize, create, communicate and manage subtle nuances in film looks from pre-production through post-production. Cinematographers can import and organize images on a per scene or per date basis.
- 7 Actor Roy Dupuis in a scene from *Maurice Richard* shot by DP Pierre Gill, CSC. Photo: Alliance Atlantis Vivalfilm

processes. He showed director James Wong those visual references two weeks before they exposed the first frame of film.

"This was our fourth film together, so we spoke a common visual language," McLachlan says. "The pre-visualization system enabled us to nail down the looks. I also used KLMS to show the HD dailies timer what the film would look like after I timed it in an optical lab."

During production, he used the digital still camera that is a component of the system to record images of scene set-ups. McLachlan downloaded those images to the computer, and used the software to manipulate nuances in colors and tones. The picture files and descriptive metadata he created gave the HD dailies timer at Technicolor Labs in Vancouver, Canada, visual and word pictures of his intentions for each shot. KLMS was also used to calibrate the monitors used by

McLachlan and everyone involved in the post-production team.

"The system also came in handy to prevent any surprises of the final look to the studio executives," he says. "It allowed them to see what the final product would look like from pre-production, through dailies and each stage of post-production."

*Black Christmas* was produced in Super 35 format on 3-perf KODAK VISION2 Expression 500T 5229 film. McLachlan timed the film for consistency and put final touches on the look during DI post-production. McLachlan used KLMS to manipulate images to indicate his intentions for creating the final look in DI.

"I used the KODAK Easyshare Printer to create prints of what shots would look like, and showed them to the director and producers," he says. "I ended up making prints for the producers to take back and hang in their offices

## "With the onset of digital technology for post-production and dailies, I needed a new way to communicate"

for decoration. This gave them a sense of comfort to know the finished film would look great."

### Managing the look

Pierre Gill, CSC used KLMS to experiment with looks and communicate his intentions to his collaborators on both the feature film *Maurice Richard (The Rocket)* and the feature *The Covenant*.

"On *Maurice Richard*, I took one digital still picture of every scene," Gill says. "I spent about 20 minutes color correcting all the shots at lunch and 15 minutes printing them. I showed the

prints to the director, other crew members and the dailies timer to make sure we were all on the same page. Everyone was glad to have an accurate idea of what the final film would look like."

He assembled a book of about 80 still pictures while filming *Maurice Richard* that they called the bible. Gill observes that one result was that the dailies were consistently close to the final look of the film. The colorist was basically able to work on his own because he knew exactly how the cinematographer envisioned the images. Gill notes that the music composer also referred to the bible. "He could feel the mood of the movie way before we were at the end of post-production," Gill said. "He was able to think about great musical concepts far in advance."

Gill used the system mainly for troubleshooting while filming *The Covenant*, and also to show the dailies timer and DI colorist his intentions for different scenes.

"I wanted to achieve a very desaturated look for *The Covenant*, and this was a great tool for pre-visualizing and staying true to that vision," he comments.

Kodak designed the Look Manager System as a practical way for cinematographers to ensure that their intentions are clearly communicated and that their vision is accurately translated from imagination to the screen. Kodak is committed to providing innovative tools to artists who tell their stories with images. As with all the tools Kodak offers, we look forward to the unique and creative ways filmmakers put them to use. To find out more about KLMS, visit [www.kodak.com/go/motion](http://www.kodak.com/go/motion).

