

KODAK'S quiet TK

Portfolio of Kodak Telecines

- ▶ Bulgaria, Sofia
- ▶ Czech Republic, Prague
- ▶ Israel, Tel Aviv
- ▶ Romania, Bucharest
- ▶ Russia, Moscow
- ▶ Serbia, Belgrade
- ▶ Spain, Alicante
- ▶ Tunisia, Tunis
- ▶ UAE, Dubai
- ▶ USA, Los Angeles

The development of Kodak's telecine facilities in Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa (CEEMA), is a map of the global film industry's evolution towards digital post production.

The late 1990s saw an exponential growth in commercials and feature productions in Central and Eastern Europe as the countries of the region began to rebuild their media infrastructures. The long tradition of movie-making on film had continued to blossom through the years under communism. When that era ended, national pride was high but domestic economies low and foreign producers discovered these were the countries to make products at economical prices. The local media learned fast, and demanded the best of the West's film technology.

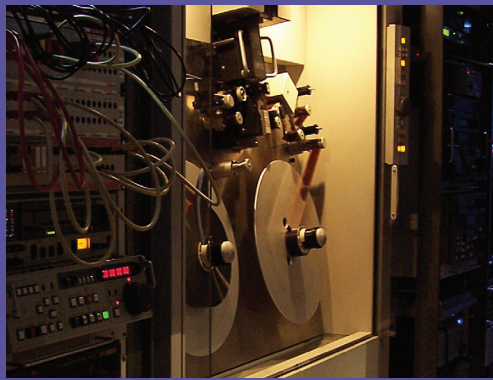
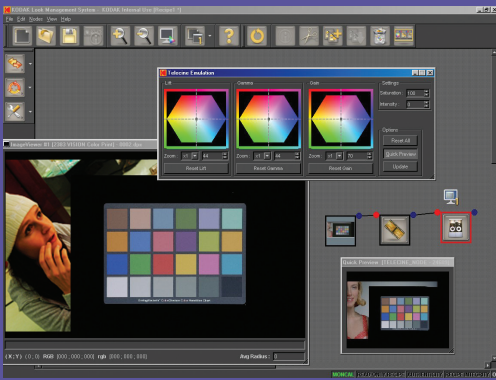
The Middle East and northern Africa followed a different route but both areas traditionally supported a strong local media industry and have also increasingly been discovered by foreign feature and commercial producers. So the cross-fertilisation of technology took root here too.

Originating on film is still the preferred route of the majority of DPs but as Ian Magowan, Kodak's CEEMA Operations Manager points out, "Nearly all post-production is now on non-linear editing of some sort - so the telecine is vital. The focus of our efforts in

my area is to support the local infrastructure and make the use of film easier." Kodak Cinelabs are the first stage of that support, and telecine transfers the next.

Two types of machine are operated by Kodak in the CEEMA area, and both use Thomson Grass Valley-type CCD line array technology. At the top end is the Spirit, in direct lineage from the original late 1990s Phillips/Eastman Kodak-developed Spirit DataCine, able to offer SD and HD video output on various formats from Betacam SP to HD Cam SR and DVD or digital web-streaming formats and, if required, upgrades to high resolution 2K data for DIs. Stepping back one generation, Kodak also offers QuadraVision telecines in some facilities. These machines have similar CCD sensor technology and output to standard definition transfers.

Neither of these machines is inexpensive and you are unlikely to find them at a knock-down price on eBay, so they have to earn their living. Magowan again; "All the filmmakers in my region aspire to the latest technology. The problem is that the region hasn't had the money to afford all the technology it dreams of. We try to provide them with a system that will give them what they need at



evolution

a reasonable price." In effect the QuadraVision machines cater for the local SD market in commercials production, local feature and the occasional broadcast documentary. If there is a Spirit on the scene, then depending on its add-ons, you can be sure that the local production scene is primarily high-end commercials in HD and SD with incoming foreign producers of both commercials and international features, demanding HD for their dailies and transfers.

Upgrade

Romania is a model of Kodak's quiet TK evolution. Laurent Morel is a senior colourist along with Claudiu Doaga at Kodak Cinelabs Romania: "We started in 1999 with a QuadraVision and a Pogle colour controller with a very early PiXi colour corrector and our clients were very busy with it. The demands at that time were local and quality was never an issue for them." Then in 2000, their expectations were raised by the appearance of a Spirit on the market. With Kodak upgrading to Spirit as well, the market was now well served at a top quality level. Another reason for the upgrade was the growing number

of foreign directors and DPs who were coming to work for local commercial producers and they were used to working on higher quality telecines around the world. That was in 2001". Morel recalls.

In 2004 another upgrade was needed - Hollywood production *The Cave* rolled into town and asked for high definition. "We were transferring dailies to HDCam then down-converting to DVCam for the editor who was working in SD. From the HDCam we were also transferring to files that could be digitally projected for screening the dailies and also delivering them to Hollywood via the internet" explains Morel. "After the production, back in Hollywood, the HDCam tapes were used for preview screening of the finished movie before it went to be scanned for the DI."

Economic production

Similar digital workflows were in demand consistently over the next three years as foreign feature-makers took advantage of Romania's more economic production costs. Then in the summer of 2007 the next hike in telecine evolution landed on

Morel's doorstep - *The Seeker: The Dark is Rising* requested HDCam SR dailies. "So we invested in an HDCam SR VTR," explains Morel. "We had to upgrade our PiXi which was 4:2:2 HD-SDI to 4:4:4 HD-SDI because this is the standard that those guys wanted." The digital dailies that international features require are mostly one-light but increasingly producers and cinematographers are asking for best light, which the Spirits can service. "Now all the producers and studio heads in Hollywood are watching dailies so the DP is very keen that they should be as close to the final look as possible," explains Morel.

It's much the same two-tier system story in the other Central and Eastern areas - a local market that slowly grows its demands on the coat-tails of international productions, mostly led by high-end local commercials taking the quality advantage when budgets allow. "These guys are very video-literate," explains Magowan. "They want the best they can get and so they moved from Digi-Beta to HDCam when we were able to supply that and now that we can supply SR they move up to SR. It's classic supply and demand in action."

The Dubai facility is a different

story but it is still one of evolution. There are few international features filming here - the extreme climate makes it difficult and expensive. Senior colourist Dan Mitre explains: "We opened in August 2004 with a Quadra machine but this year we installed a Spirit. 80% of our workload is commercials and we can output standard definition to Digi-Beta, Beta SP, DVCam, MiniDV, DVD but currently all at standard definition." But Mitre feels that will change very soon; "The telecine can output to HD and 2K, but the next step will be to upgrade the colour corrector, to buy HD VRTs and some additional equipment." The reason for this is probably unique to the area. The oil Emirate is not short of funding and has high aspirations, illustrated by the growth in stature of the Dubai International Film Festival. "There is a lot of potential and a lot of ambition and it is not only about people who can afford to buy expensive equipment," explains Mitre. "It is also about people who want to learn and there are a lot of houses and agencies here that bring experienced filmmakers from outside to teach the processes." That means local demands are at an international level and Mitre is enthusiastic to service those needs. "It was nothing in the beginning; everyone was going to Beirut, Mumbai or to Singapore for telecine or processing. We grew the business."

New workflows

And what will the telecine story be in the future? Ian Magowan looks into his crystal ball and gives his personal view: "Dailies are a very specific requirement so you need real time running. Once you are at the fine cut point, you start the scanning process at 2K or 4K so it becomes a two level system. Even though you can scan at 4K on a Spirit, my view is that people, instead of buying a second telecine, will probably buy a scanner. That is the way the industry is moving generally and when it does you need more technology, different skills and new workflows, much of which we have in the region and in our facilities but that is a whole new story."