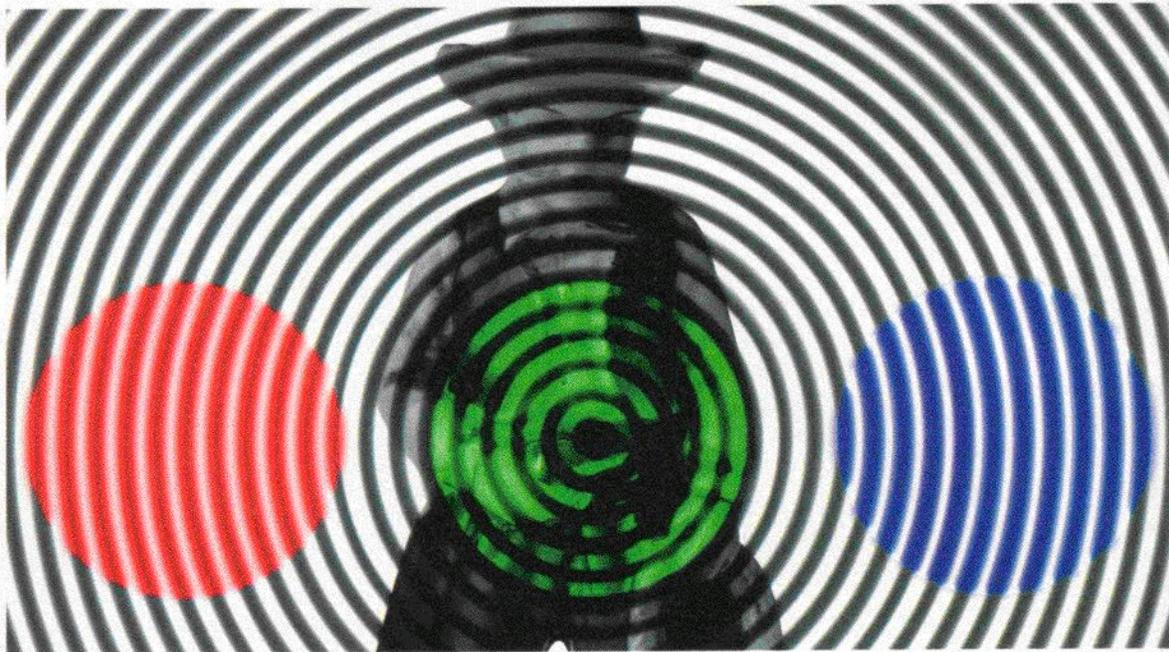


Technology is leading global communications into the unknown, and no one in TV wants to be left behind. Rob Buckley looks ahead at products you're going to get at NAB - whether you like them or not



SCOPHICS

Frontier territory

When non-linear editing first became possible, prophets proclaimed "soon, the IT and broadcast industries will converge." And as the power of computers increased, so video editing became more computer-based - to the point where few people now edit the old-fashioned way. But as the broadcast industry has become more like the IT industry, so it has taken on some of its less worthy characteristics.

Which is why, at NAB this year, the goods on display don't have a host of new features for which practitioners have been clamouring. Instead, in common with its new role-model, the industry is getting a whole host of features manufacturers *think* it should have, or feel they need to offer to fit in with the latest craze.

Looking around, you'd be forgiven for thinking that every editor and facility in the world wants to stream video over the internet. Matrox's DigiSuite DTV and RT2000 editing equipment offer streaming support. Media 100's products do too. Chyron's there with a streaming server and Avid is trying its hardest with at least four products on its stands (Unity, Symphony, DV-Xpress, MC version 10).

You can't blame them. Given that everyone got almost all the features

they needed when AVR77-ready MCs came along, trying to persuade people to buy more kit has been an uphill struggle. And, rather than face another HD debacle, they hope to get in before everyone really does need streaming technology in four to five years.

This year (only a year after the US was crying out for them), nearly everyone offers an HD system - with the exception of Quantel, whose full Monty is starting to seem like a half-Nelson; promise everyone HD quality at AVR77 speeds if you want - but make sure you deliver. Post Impressions' Spirit is sure to impress - a resolution-independent NT workstation that supports all the HD standards. And Jaleo, current holder of the "nice kit, shame about the user-base" title, will have a real-time version of its eponymous system. Even virtual studios companies Orad and RT-Set are getting in on the act with HD systems.

JVC's DVHS and Panasonic's DVCPRO HD will both be vying for the title of top new tape format, but it seems just a matter of time before recordable DVD lands like a nuke in the middle of the format war and ends it all. DVD-authoring and MPEG-2 encoding are put forward as the killer applications for just about every non-

Avid editing system. Sonic Solutions is even going one better with "streaming DVD" - interactive DVD-content which can be streamed at web resolutions (which is just showing off really).

In graphics, free Unix Linux is the latest buzzword. Even SGI is jumping on the bandwagon, spurning its own Irix for the cheaper relative. Ignore the fact that Linux is far better suited to servers than workstations - it has too much hype surrounding it for firms to resist its pull. Hence Side Effects' Houdini for Linux and various murmurings at Softimage, which is being very tight-lipped about its NAB plans.

But among all these buzzword-compliant products are a few gems (blink and you'll miss them). Symphony 3.0 promises moving mattes, a keyer from Ultimatte and further extras yet to be announced. Media Composer 10, complete with 24p mastering, is also debuting - earlier than expected for once. And Sony's George Lucas coproduction - a 24p HDCam for digital movie-making - is also on the bill.

Along the road to previous NABs are many buzzwords-turned-dead-ends - interactive CDs, numerous vapourware telecines, et al. You can bet some of this year's will be tomorrow's eight-tracks. The trick is not buying them. ■