



The world is non-linear

The last Bond film *Tomorrow Never Dies* was the first to go in for non-linear editing, but it wasn't until the next, *The World is Not Enough*, that the process paid off. Rob Buckley looks over the editor's shoulder

Long-running series are almost exclusively the province of TV, but there's one movie franchise that's so big its films are called shows and are known to the crews by numbers: Bond, James Bond. Bond 19, aka *The World is Not Enough*, is the latest in the 36-year-old series, now nearing the end of post for a November release.

"It's incredible," enthuses visual effects supervisor Andrew MacRitchie, "when you watched the movies as a kid, you never imagined you'd be working on a Bond film." Bond 19 is his second, although, with a CV that's as thick as your average Tolstoy novel (including *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *The Princess Bride* and more recently *The Mummy*), he's no neophyte. Its predecessor, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, was the first to see non-linear editing, but short production and post-production schedules (just ten days between completing filming and the first preview) and the rawness of the technology meant non-linear didn't fare as well as hoped.

"There's always a problem when the gear's not 100% reliable," he says. "The crew breaks, comes to see rushes with the editors, only to find problems with the telecine, the machines have broken down and the rushes aren't ready - and this could go on

for two or three days. We also had sound problems and the bits of software we were using weren't completely compatible with each other."

In keeping with Bond's military background (as the SAS says, proper planning prevents piss-poor performance), MacRitchie and editor Jim Clark sat down with their consultants, Root6, well in advance of production to iron out the problems discovered on Bond 18. Backing for this came from Eon's producers Barbara Broccoli and Michael Wilson, both very pro digital technology, and veterans of the *Tomorrow Never Dies* non-linear initiation.

Together with sound recordist Chris Munro, the group worked out a system that would minimise the work the editors would have to do to deliver each day's all-important lunchtime synch rushes. "That's an unmoveable. Everyone breaks for lunch then views the rushes," says Root6's Graham McGuinness. "In terms of production confidence, it's a biggie. Lunchtimes are almost a barometer of the production's perceptions about how the cutting-room is functioning."

With the luxury of a two-week period before first rushes, after setting up the equipment the group even had a chance to dry-run their system to iron-

out problems. When filming finally started, footage would be sent over to the labs each day, then be telecined as before, but connected to the telecine was an Avid Media Station. As the colourist recorded the graded footage on to DigiBeta, a duplicate was created in a Media Composer connected to the telecine. This then went straight into one of four Film Composers used by the editors on the Bond set at Pinewood.

Meanwhile, sound came straight from DATs recorded on-set. Rather than simply input the contents of the whole tape, the team of four editors was able to pick which parts of the tapes it wanted: Munroe had connected a PalmPilot with logging software to the DAT recorders. The sound recordists on all the filming units could e-mail the logs to the editing team so they would know exactly where takes were recorded on each DAT, and batch digitise them in.

"We weren't using dazzlingly new technology," says McGuinness, "but it was the way all these things came together that was important." Working non-linear meant savings not just in time: mag transfers for sound were avoided. Says assistant editor Mark Sanger, "last time, we spent £70k on

mag transfers just for the lunchtime rushes screenings. It was already in the system, but they had it transferred to mag so they could run the mag with the print. I guess that's £70k just down the drain."

VHS tapes of footage could be with any of the four film units around the world the day after editing to match scenes. Second and third units were in France during this year's severe avalanches. With weather so bad that they could only shoot a couple of hours each day, the crews were able to catch up the shooting schedule because they could view their own work after only a couple of days.

The main glitches came when director Michael Apted changed his mind about shots overnight, for instance, and brought in new requirements in the morning. The editors would then have to cut the print down to size, recut it in Film Composer and have it ready for lunchtime; they still managed it.

With little financial reason to do the work in-house (and with turn-around eventually proving even faster than expected), MacRitchie outsourced around 220 effects shots to Digital Film, the Magic Camera Company and Cinesite. Being a Bond film, set-pieces are high on the agenda and this film's main sequences include the final confrontation between Bond and the villain in a pipeline (which

involved approximately 60 shots), and another in a caviar factory.

The facilities had staff on-set able to work with the latest DigiBeta edits output by Sanger and co, then have an Avid Symphony autoconform the results. Publicists could then have access to the latest footage for promos and trailers (as well as quick feedback on product placement within scenes...) and the stars could come in and sit down with the editors to see how cuts were progressing and keep up to date with how they looked.

Nevertheless, there was no "cgi for the sake of it": crew pride wouldn't allow it. "The stunt guys and the action director all (quite understandably) want to be able to say 'we did that,' so cgi crops up where it's useful in other areas. There's a ski-chase with Pierce Brosnan and Sophie Marceau and it's mainly live-action stuff: it could have been shot blue-screen, but there are only a couple of cgs in it. Crews would still rather shoot as much as possible if they can and fall back on cg."

MacRitchie pleads ignorance as to his budget ("I guess they just trust me") but suspects it was slightly less than Bond 18's - though final costs for 19 proved slightly more than its predecessor's. But, since he doesn't know his budget, he doesn't



Eon's *The World is Not Enough* on set at Pinewood

know if he's gone over it...

Of course, for Bond 20, there'll be even more refinements to the process. McGuinness regrets the film didn't happen six months later: the post-crew just missed the launch of Avid's 24P uncompressed universal mastering technology and its Unity media-sharing system. He's sure, however, that Bond producers and others will be going to non-linear editing even more in the future. "People are very cautious, producers in particular. They value predictability in what can be delivered. But now the technology exists for pictures as well as sound, we all believe it's just a matter of time." ■

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