Lions and Tigers and Bears!

Editing of Biblical Proportions Made Simple with Lightworks

Telling the story of a modern day Noah's Ark is no easy task, however, adding some Lightworks zest makes creating a boatload of animals and massive flooding seem a lot less cumbersome.

Evan Almighty tells the story of Buffalo, NY newsman, Evan Baxter (played by Steve Carell) who is elected to Congress to "Change the World." When duty calls and Evan must sponsor a bill to allow development in national parks, God appears and instead, prompts Evan to construct an ark. As wood, tools and pairs of animals continue to surface on Evan's property, his focus shifts to building the ark to "Change the World," and his new "calling" becomes quite clear to everyone surrounding him.

Editor Scott Hill has worked on a variety of feature-length comedies, including Evan Almighty's predecessor, Bruce Almighty –

however, Evan Almighty's budget called for a heftier production effort than its antecedent; one that necessitated massive flooding and hundreds of live and CGI animal species. "Filming all of the animals was tough – there were a lot of them. We shot close to two hundred pairs live and 300 more were CGI," said Hill.

Filmed on location in Charlottesville, Virginia over a 3 to 4 month period, and also at Universal Studios in Los Angeles, California, Hill worked with three assistants and a visual effects editor. He brought four Lightworks Alacrity systems with him to the Virginia shoot. When production

relocated to Universal Studios for green-screen and blue-screen shots, mostly with live animals, Hill edited at the studio lot on a network of five Lightworks Alacrity systems sharing off the same RAID; all Fibre Channel SAN with Essential Server Support. Academy Award®-winning visual effects company Rhythm & Hues (R&H) worked on creating the CGI animal effects, with help from C.I.S. Hollywood and CafeFX; and Noah's Ark would not be complete without modern day flood imagery, which was handled by Academy Award-winning visual effects company, Industrial Light and Magic (ILM).

HARNESSING THE FLOODGATES WITH LIGHTWORKS ALACRITY

Lightworks Alacrity systems are powerfully integrated with Geevs Video servers for flawless multi-camera ingest, perfect for on-the-fly creation. Due to the complexity of the scenes with live and CGI animals, Hill found himself locking up some four or five cameras at a time. The Alacrity provided him with a truly fast camera-to-edit solution.

"Lightworks is such a reliable system. It's never an issue going through footage – and one of my favorite features is its ability to backup your work transparently in the background. When I went over dailies with [director] Tom Shadyac, I never had to wait for the machine to backup. This is my issue with other systems… it's frustrating when you have an idea fresh in your mind and you have to wait until it's done backing up - you lose your train of thought. Lightworks never interrupts my workflow."

Compositing animal footage shot on green-screen and blue-screen also proved an easier feat with Lightworks. "I didn't have to render like did on other systems. A lot of green and blue screen composite shots, where I had multiple layers, were all in real-time. When I had footage that contained a lion, a

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> Scott Hil, Editor

bear and a giraffe, and I wanted to remove the giraffe, Lightworks let me go in and customise that specific plate. I didn't have to re-render the shot and it didn't compromise image quality – I could immediately playback the footage with the changes Tom asked for," Hill said.

Although some sound and VFX editors working on Evan Almighty were not accustomed to utilising Lightworks, the simplicity and ease of use of the Alacrity fostered immaculate results. Its exceptional export qualities allowed Hill to flawlessly exchange files with R&H and ILM visual effects artists using a DI, and sound and music editors applauded the Alacrity's outstanding audio features. "We used OMF files, which worked smoothly with our sound editors." Hill also highlighted Lightworks' faultless ability of synching audio tracks. "Once I've done preview screens, I take sound that I've recorded on the mixing stage and allocate it back into Lightworks. By mid-movie, I'm running 16 tracks of audio with multiple layers of

video. Lightworks immediately tells me if any parts of the 16 tracks have been thrown out of sync, and once I tell it where to fix synch, it will automatically correct the tracks for me. It's such a brilliant feature that saved us hours in post-production, and everyone loved it."

EVERLASTING LIGHT

"Of all the machines I've worked with, Lightworks is definitely the most stable – in all the years I have been editing with Lightworks, which dates back to '93, I really have never lost an edit," explained Hill. "It is also the fastest system I have encountered in my career – it saves huge amounts of time in post-production. It takes twice as many keystrokes with any other system – it's much more simplified in how you edit, which in turn, produces quicker and more precise results."

"Editing on Lightworks is a dream… it just flows better," he comments (no pun intended).

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EditShare Americas
3 Brook Street
Watertown
MA 02472, United States
E: sales@editshare.com
T: +1 617 782 0479

EditShare Asia-Pacific
6 Garden City Office Park
Unit 22 & 23, 2404 Logan Road
Eight Mile Plains, QLD 4113, Australia
E: sales.asia@editshare.com
T: +61 7 3171 2950

EditShare EMEA
Clifton House, Bunnian Place
Basingstoke, Hants
RG21 7JE, UK
E: sales@editshare.co.uk
T: +44 20 7183 2255

EditShare®