RIDLEY SCOTT FILMNIGHT TRAILER

Jan Wurster | BATAR (intl.)

assignment due: 2000-01-31
lecture: Editing [AVID]
tutor: John Silverside

preface

This document contains the following for submission with the AVID editing assignment:

- shot list (medialog)
- paper edit
- production diary
- self assessment

The first two items have been reformatted using a PC for easier access and recognition.

Rushes Shotlist. Programme Title: Ridley Scott Filmnight Director: Jan Wurster Editor: Jan Wurster						page 1
Shoot Date 99-12-08 course: BATAR						
Tape No.	Start	End	Shot No.	description	est. Screen duration	Video Audio Tracks
1	16:38:00:00	16:38:23:00	1	EXT. Nostromo. Flyby. Atmoshperic sounds	5	V A1
1	16:38:47:00	16:38:59:00	2	INT. Cockpit Nostromo computer sys	5	V A1
1	16:39:00:00	16:39:23:00	3	INT. Nostromo. Crew awakening	10	V
1	16:40:12:10	16:40:38:00	4	EXT. Nostromo approaching planet	5	V
1	16:41:15:00	16:41:37:00	5	EXT. Eggship, planet surface	5	V A1
1	16:41:37:00	16:41:51:00	6	INT. Eggship. Voice "What the hell is that?"	5	V A1
1	16:42:19:00	16:42:26:00	7	VO "Come here kitty"	5	A1
1	16:42:45:00	16:42:53:10	8	INT. Alien head	5	V
1	16:43:01:00	16:43:09:00	9	INT. Alien attacks	5	V
1	16:44:58:00	16:45:03:00	10	INT. Ripley, face	5	V
1	16:43:58:00	16:44:21:00	11	INT. Lambert, face	10	V A1
1	16:44:21:15	16:44:41:00	12	INT. Lambert confronts Alien	5	V A1
1	16:45:03:10	16:46:19:00	13	EXT. Flight over future LA. Music	10	V A1
1	16:46:19:00	16:46:43:00	14	EXT. Introduction character: Deckard	5	V A1
1	16:46:43:00	16:47:48:00	15	EXT / INT. Flight in spinner to Police station	15	V A1
1	16:47:48:00	16:48:04:00	16	INT. Police station, Deckard briefing	5	V A1
1	16:48:05:20	16:48:22:10	17	INT. Tyrell corporation. Deckard meets Rachel	5	V A1
1	16:48:46:00	16:49:05:00	18	EXT. Deckard's first 'retirement'	5	V A1
1	16:49:12:00	16:49:12:00	19	EXT. Street - Briant describes Deckard	5	V A1
1	16:49:30:00	16:50:42:00	20	INT. Deckards apt. - Rachel at piano	5	V
1	16:51:07:00	16:51:56:00	21	INT. Deckards apt. - Rachel / Deckard hugging	5	V
1	16:52:08:00	16:52:41:00	22	INT. J.F. Sebastians building, Deckard hunting	5	V
1	16:52:45:00	16:52:52:00	23	INT. J.F. Sebastians building, Deckard shoots Pris	5	V A1
1	16:52:52:00	16:53:18:00	24	INT. J.F. Sebastians building, c/o Deckards gun	5	V
1	16:53:23:00	16:53:49:00	25	EXT. J.F. Sebastians buildings,Roy Batty on roof	20	V A1

paper edit RIDLEY SCOTT FILMNIGHT

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1	16:42:45:00	16:42:53:10	8	INT. Alien head	5	V
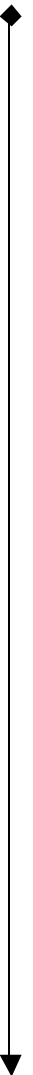
Production diary

1999-11-25	Compilation Tape first try, technical glitches encountered
1999-12-07	Compilation Tape finished
1999-12-08	preparation of medialog and paperEdit, First Avid evening Session. Basic Trailer finished
1999-12-12	3D Studio MAX animation session (half of a day, all of a night)
1999-12-13	Import PICT Sequence (250 frames) on Avid, preliminary final cut
1999-12-17	Final Cut, digital cut on VHS

equipment used list

Panasonic SVHS machines [source, recorder]	
Panasonic SVHS editing controller	both in SVHS 4 / 5
Apple Macintosh II series for creating medialog	Macintosh suite
consumer VHS for reviewing, shot log and paper edit	Adelphi library
Notebook Intel Celeron 300 Mhz | Win98 | 3D Studio MAX Release 3 Adobe Photoshop 5 | Adobe Premiere 5.1	provided by student
external harddrive to transfer PICT sequence of 3D animation from CDROM to AVID internal Harddrive	provided by facilities
AVID Macintosh | Media Composer	AVID A
professional SVHS recorder | Video matrix	CTA

Self Assessment

For the assignment, it was decided to do a filmnight trailer as a homage to the director Ridley Scott. Out of his many works, Blade Runner and Alien were selected to represent the peculiar visual power in his movies, apart from both appealing not only to science fiction lovers but also sporting dense, thrilling scripts.

Obviously the two movies have not much in common regarding locations, story, characters or visual appearance – not even the time setting is similar. Alien is set to play in the far more distant future whilst Blade Runner is set in 2019. The similarities lie a bit beyond the obvious – for both movies Ridley Scott engaged very capable people responsible for the visual appearance. In the case of Alien he got the notorious H.R. Giger to draw the initial design of more than just the famous 'Alien' creature, in Blade Runner Syd Mead was responsible for all the designs the movie is known for, such as the police car (Spinner) and the street furniture.

The concept of the trailer actually involves two trailers which are to appear on TV equally often. Both would introduce the movies, but lay focus on only one of them, providing only a few mostly visual impressions of the second one and ending with a 3D animation conveying the 'flair' of the movie focussed on in the trailer. Both would finish with a plate containing some additional graphics fitting for both movies and the necessary information (appearance on TV, names of the movies, reason for the film night etc). The trailer produced for this assignment is the one focussing on the movie Blade Runner.

While producing the trailer, several problems occurred. The first one was to find a trailer concept that would meet all the requirements and specifications that had been provided. It proved impossible to combine both movies in a way – at least not without extensive use of additional (spoken) text. But this was to be avoided in order to emphasize the enormous visual power involved in Ridley Scotts movies. That was how the concept decribed above came about. After the initial concept was finished, the compilation tape was produced. As the editor worked with several online edit systems before, but on BETACAM basis, this should not have been a problem – but it was. Apart from several connections set up wrongly, the first edit suite (SVHS4) distorted hifi audio tracks on the destination tape – or so it seemed. When the few bits on the tape were being replayed on a consumer vcr, everything seemed fine while the recorder machine in the edit suite reproduced the recorded audio with lots of distortions making it unable to use. Apparently these distortions were not actually on the tape – but that only became clear afterwards, after the whole session had been wasted trying to find the error. Meanwhile the recorder in SHVS4 works perfectly again after facilities have been informed by the editor immediately after the session.

Next edit suite I booked (SVHS5) first seemed to work fine, after half finishing the compilation tape I luckily found that both video and audio were distorted (player could not get frame lock while replaying the tape causing the picture to 'pump' and got to white from time to time as well as distorting hifi audio) because I had tried to use INSERT edits. Normally this should work with the 'pseudo' timecode the vhs players generate from servo information on a blacked tape. Everything seemed to work fine when ASSEMBLE edits were used – with all the disadvantages like unprecise edits.

Having finally finished the compilation tape, next day was used to do both medialog and paperedit before the first Avid session started. Batch digitising the shots from the medialog showed major mistakes on the compilation tape. VHS – fashion dirty edits (half or full frames without video signal or distorted because vhs cannot be edited frame-precise) caused AVID to discontinue digitising with error messages like 'video signal missing' or 'corrupt video signal'. It showed here that trying to get as many shots as possible on the tape does not really pay. The editor should have concentrated on fewer shots and should have added at least 5 seconds pre-roll before and post-roll after each shot. Surprisingly enough, AVID was indeed able to capture all the media needed for the trailer – but only when the missing shots were digitised one at a time only. Sometimes a second try was needed even then. It was discovered that AVID rolls the tape slower and more precise if only a single master-clip has to be digitised.

With all the required shots available, the trailer was edited to the point where the 3D animation parts would be put. For this first trailer, Blade Runner was to be introduced to the potential viewers. Having dealt with Blade Runner in a comprehensive analysis for his own university, one of the many issues was the visual atmosphere created by the director, influenced by the ideas of Syd Mead. Even some of the more deeply hidden meanings and concepts of the movie deal with visual perception and especially the

eye – so apart from introducing the viewer to important characters and storylines it was decided to show as much of the amazing visuals as necessary to appeal to the viewer while not revealing to much of the designs. The slow, floating camera movements and the quiet images along with the original score were set to contrast with the more violent themes of the movie's story. The ambivalence of the main character – he both loves and kills replicants, many analyst even state himself as one of the replicants – is another element in the trailer. For an ending, the editor could not resist using the perhaps most famous scene of Blade Runner: Roy Batty's last words to Deckard ('All these moments will be lost in time – like tears in rain.'). Apart from being a fairly long shot, this could be regarded as a scene that should be left to the viewer to discover in the actual viewer. But as the editor understands a trailer for a TV theme night, these type of trailers not only should interest viewers to go and see the movie like movie trailers usually do. Theme nights like the one in question often show movies that have been around several times – people often know these movies or have at least seen them before. So a major task is to remind the viewer and to provoke or recreate positive feelings about it, thus creating the wish to see it again. This justifies the revelation of movie specials – taking the risk that people that did in fact not see the movie before could be slightly disappointed that this part has been given away before. But as it does not reveal anything important regarding plot and storyline, this was considered secondary. Not being able to shorten this part, it is also mainly responsible for the length of the trailer. Going along the initial concept, the trailer closes with some very short but characterising video and audio impressions of 'ALIEN' before continuing with a animated graphics section providing the necessary information.

The next session was used to import the PICT sequence generated on the editor's own notebook using Adobe Photoshop to add a black mask to the 250 frames and therefore bringing them from 720 x 326 pixel format used to speed up rendering time to the 720 x 576 pixel format required by PAL standard. As the whole trailer is in widescreen format for continuity reasons with the source materials, this was required of all the graphics parts as well – apart form the fact that the mask was to be used as background for another graphics effect. The 3D animation itself was entirely realised by the author with no pre-built models used. Given the very short time needed, both quality and concept seem alright but the camerapath would perhaps need a little more work. The typical lens flares were intended to be on the final render, but as this would have doubled render time, they were omitted, relying entirely on volume lights and glow effects in conjunction with atmospheric for to recreate the unique Blade Runner atmosphere. Spectacular, colourful and effect-overloaded appearance was deliberately avoided as the whole purpose of the animation sequence was not to 'show off'. Moreover, it was intended as an interesting way of conveying important details to the viewer while maintaining the atmosphere.

With the kind help of facilities it was indeed possible to get all 250 frames on the AVID's harddrive. Next step was to import the sequence to AVID – but Media Composer apparently doesn't support importing PICT sequences as takes. The consequences were that the editor used a separate bin and sequence to create a video mixdown of all the single frames for use in the main edit project, requiring him to edit one frame's length of each animation-frame after another till all 250 were put together. Apart from this time-consuming task he had to sit and wait for one and a half hours till Media Composer had compressed all single frames to AVR3 format …

Next step was to create an additional effect already mentioned – the animated putting together of the words 'Ridley Scott' on the top mask of the letterbox. Apart from solving the rather technical issue that the source materials for 'ALIEN' were 4:3 format while Blade Runner was in widescreen 16:9 letterbox by masking the top and bottom areas of the alien shots, the animated composition of the director's name serves the purpose of preliminarily revealing the 'theme of the theme night' to the viewers, supported by borrowing an effect used in ALIEN's titles. As the viewer will concentrate on the picture, this calm and necessarily only slightly distracting element will be left as a new element to discover when he sees the trailer the second or third time. It helps to keep viewers interested – as most trailers are repeated over and over again by the TV station to reach a bigger amount of potential viewers, this is regarded important.

This element has been layouted using Macromedia Freehand, modelling the two words with simple geometric elements – simple rectangles wherever possible – trying to recreate the effect used to produce the word 'ALIEN' for this movie's titles. Apart from the fact that the editor had always been fascinated by that, the similarity will attract and remind people that actually saw 'ALIEN' – others will simply regard it as a graphic element of the trailer until they really see the 'original'. The actual key-frames were created using Adobe Photoshop scripting to create the mask area where the moving picture should appear later. The animation consists of 20 keyframes that are edited with simple dissolves in Media Composer to get

the fade-in effect on each frame. A simple key effect from Media Composer's effect palette made the moving picture visible again. While putting the raw effect together with Media Composer only took about half an hour, rendering the whole video track with the key effect lasted nearly three hours.

Apart from all the problems probably more or less caused by the additional efforts in graphical elements, the trailer could be finished in time, thanks to the kind help of the facilities crew and a little bit of extra time spent on AVID A. Probably the editor has overdone some parts a little bit, perhaps even putting too much emphasize on these effects – the basic trailer concept would have worked without all of that. But for him spending 30 hours non-stop in front of first his own notebook display, then the AVID's own two CRT's on that legendary Sunday-Monday was certainly worth it. It is his opinion that his personal fun whilst storyboarding, drawing, modelling, texturing, animating, designing and then editing everything together shows in the finished project, perhaps even justifying the overlength …

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