

Testimonials



Amalgated Clyde, Inc. Dives into WildBlue AV

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Amalgated Clyde has two missions. First, we provide post-production, animation, and compositing services to ad agency, corporate, and broadcast clients. To do this competitively means we have to be knowledgeable about all of the subsystems that keep the workflow smooth and allow us to meet our clients' needs on their schedules. Over the years we've leveraged that knowledge to fulfill a second mission: providing consulting services to a somewhat different client base looking for advice on making the most of their digital content delivery choices, with a special emphasis on small-scale HD theater applications.

When we recently decided to add to our SD infrastructure we were immediately drawn to the Bluefish444 Wildblue AV for two reasons. We liked the fact that the card supported our existing choices for editing and compositing software and our technical requirement of providing the best-looking pictures possible meant we wanted to have 10bit RGB capability at our fingertips when we needed it.

Our goal was to build a small 4 node 8 CPU renderfarm that, along with a switch, would reside in a 5RU rack frame that we could move from place to place in a rolling case. It needed to support compositing, 3D animation, and uncompressed SD editing.

We turned to Boxx Technologies, a company with whom we've had a long-standing and successful relationship, to supply us with the 4 dual CPU single rack unit computers and to integrate the Wildblue AV and some large SCSI drives in one of the machines. We weren't really prepared for the way this little powerhouse rack would change our workflow.

Normally, we would test a new configuration before we put it to use, but in this case we took the bold and perhaps brash step of deploying it for the first time in March 2004, on an important corporate meeting opener for an ad agency with a large pharmaceutical account. The specifications for the job required that we use a number of stock footage shots which were originated in film and telecined to digital betacam. There was also a dramatic scenario to be shot and for this, we turned to our sister company, Advance Visuals, for their experience on the production side. They shot this segment on 16mm film using the newest Kodak ISO100 and ISO500 stocks. This material was telecined to digital betacam and scene color-correction was done during the transfer using a DaVinci color corrector.

The next step was our rough cut. We captured all of the material from the shoot directly through Premiere Pro. The very first thing we noticed when we played back the captured footage was that it looked exactly like the source footage. It had a transparency that I hadn't seen from any other card or NLE that I have worked with. I compared the results to footage captured with another of our NLE systems and really noticed the difference by comparing the grain structure of the film image, which was somewhat blurred-out by the other uncompressed capture card. There were also subtle color shifts in the footage that were not present in the clips captured with the Wildblue. My immediate reaction was "wow- this is just what I need to do truly reliable work in color-correction and image filtering". As I worked more with Premiere Pro I noticed the Wildblue AV responded smoothly and dependably. I'm big on feel when it comes to cutting. I don't want hardware to interrupt my process, so I was really pleased to see how well the card handled all the standard editing tasks. Scrubbing through the timeline, for instance, was magical.

After our rough cut was in good shape, we turned to Digital Fusion to complete the color-correction of the stock shots and to make some animated graphics. We captured the stock footage using Symmetry, which controlled the Sony ADW500 flawlessly. I used 10 bit YUV mode for capture, mostly out of poor planning. Next time I would probably just go ahead and capture 10bit RGB for material I was bringing directly into DF. Playback of the source footage through DF worked great and it looked so nice that I couldn't resist spending a little extra time noodling with it.

The next step was to create some animated graphics in DF. I've been doing a lot of this stuff on my laptop lately, just for the sake of convenience, so working on the dual 2.8GHz Xeon machine with playback on the Wildblue was shockingly powerful. I kept adding layers, animating them and just playing through the timeline in realtime. It was only when I added a particle tool with lots of glowy particles that I saw a slowdown. No problem, I said, time to kick in the other nodes. After that I started using network preview to RAM and playing that back through the Wildblue. It was truly awesome. Instead of settling for a half-size crappy looking preview, I was looking at the real thing, and my client could look at it without me having to say "imagine that orange will be a little more yellow when we watch it on the NTSC monitor."

With the graphics completed, we finished our cut in Premiere Pro. As usual we were working right down to the deadline trying to accommodate client requested changes, eating bad food and drinking coffee to make it through the wee hours of the morning to make our delivery time. So it was a great relief to find that the performance of the Wildblue AV was solid. No unexpected gremlins popped up at the last minute to thwart us. Nothing got flakey. It just worked, and the client was thrilled with the results. I was happy with the results too, but I was even happier to know I had a new and improved post production chain that I could rely on to achieve better looking pictures than ever before.

Amalgamated Clyde Incorporated has been providing post-production, compositing, and animation services since 1990. The company has been located in New York since 1998, where it serves primarily an advertising agency client base. Amalgamated Clyde also provides HD systems design for post-production, distribution, and projection. The company focuses on meeting the needs of its clients on time and on budget, while bringing the highest level of creative design to their projects.

Clyde Tressler, President

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