



Louisiana Film Magazine
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Warbirds Flies Through Post with Cinefilm HD Dailies

Baton Rouge – Louisiana was turned into the South Pacific for a recent independent feature shot in Baton Rouge entitled *Warbirds*. What made this WWII science fiction production unique was a new workflow suggested by Cinefilm Lab working through their new Baton Rouge branch office. “I had worked with Cinefilm for years but they suggested a new dailies process when we first began to run budget numbers,” noted UPM Phil Smoot. “Instead of getting the usual standard def dailies for offline, we were able to provide the editor with HD quality files on a FW drive, and we had less cost for tape stock. We had the editors do a test and it all worked fine and made more sense to try the new technology.”

Warbirds was a 35mm shoot transferred to HDCam masters for a DI finish with plans for a 35mm film release. The usual workflow calls for DVCam or Digibeta dailies with 3/2 pulldown for a rough cut and later conform using 24p EDLs to the HDCam masters. But new software codecs in Apple’s Final Cut Pro allowed for making high quality HD dailies. “When I learned they were planning a lot of effects shots and an HD finish,” explained Cinefilm Account Manager Joe Huggins, “I suggested they forgo SD tapes and use the brand new Apple HD ProRes format for offline. It produces 24p quality HD in file sizes smaller than SD and you don’t have to digitize dailies tapes, they are ready for import direct to Final Cut Pro.” The media was sent on small LaCie Rugged FW drives about the size of a Blackberry and recycled each day to the lab for the next transfer.

The production company headed by William R. Greenblatt worked through Louisiana Media Productions and took advantage of the state tax incentives in production and post now that Atlanta-based Cinefilm opened a branch office in Baton Rouge. *Warbirds* tells the story of Japanese and American soldiers battling on a Pacific Island who encounter a cave containing pre-historic Pterodactyl eggs. The film is directed by Kevin Gendreau and stars Brian Krause from “Charmed,” and will have its American television premiere on the Sci-Fi Channel.

The film’s DP was well known cinematographer Adolfo Bartoli who wanted to establish the look of 1940-50’s era films. “When we talked about the style for the dailies he wanted to achieve a ‘Technicolor’ look,” states Senior Colorist Ron Anderson, “a stock that no longer exists but had rich saturation and vivid contrast. I remember that look well when I used to transfer old films for CBS/20 Century Fox. The cinematography looks fantastic and the dailies evoke a period feel for right away. It doesn’t look like a low-budget feature at all.”

Anderson transferred to HDCam and made a simul copy direct to FW drive with matching timecode using Apple's ProRes HD codec. Sound Engineer Luke Tingle synced the audio from DVD-RAM direct to the drives in FCP for import as a project sequence ready to edit. The drives were overnighted to California for editor Margaret Guinee. "It was such a time saver not to have to digitize in a full hour each day," exclaimed Margaret, "and what a visual difference to be seeing HD material for off line and not have to deal with 3/2 pulldown from 30fps video tape. This was my first experience in 24p offline, but I predict it's the way all features will be done. And I can provide cuts in HD for the effects team instead of a SD proxy. Everybody's happy!"

Current plans call for a final DI to be done in the new D-Cinema suite at Cinefilm taking the 24p HD offline list and batch digitizing the HDCam tapes in full 10bit 4:2:2 to the SAN network. The final color grade will be done using Apple Color with Tangent colorist panels. All the EFX shots will be added along with the final audio mix at that time for output to HD tape for festivals and distributors and eventually to a 35mm film out.

Warbirds soldiers saved the world from per-historic creatures, and Cinefilm's direct to drive HD dailies helped save the post process and begin the era of making SD tape extinct.

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Cinefilm's Senior Colorist Ron Anderson created the look of "Technicolor stock" in the Spirit HD suite for the Baton Rouge production of the WWII Sci-Fi film "WarBirds." This was one of the first features to use the new Apple ProRes HD for tape-less dailies on FW drive.