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TheFrank Aldana A *Journey of Peace* with EDIUS and the world's largest peace mural

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CASE STUDY

CUSTOMER
TheFrank Aldana, Philippines
Director/Editor/VFX/Voiceover artist for Red Ei8ht Inc.
www.youtube.com/user/frankaldana

CHALLENGE
Document Project EDSA (Epifanio Delos Santos Avenue) with over 3,000 volunteers painting a 4 km (2.5 miles) canvas of walls to build a culture of peace
Incorporate vast amounts of footage shot on various devices in a variety of resolutions

SOLUTION
EDIUS 6.5 multiformat nonlinear editing system for real-time, native editing
EDIUS NX PCI Express I/O bus card

BENEFIT
Any in, any out format support
Customizability options
System reliability and stability

Background

Project EDSA (Epifanio de los Santos Avenue) — also known as Journey of Peace in EDSA — is all about creating a positive social epidemic. The idea is to mainstream peace-building through what Filipinos call *bayanihan*, the spirit of collective effort and cooperation by ordinary people from all walks of life.

This collective effort would take the form of a massive peace mural with thousands of volunteers painting nearly 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) of walls over the course of eight weeks.

To capture this enormous *bayanihan* undertaking would be impossible to accomplish alone. TheFrank Aldana (yes, he refers to himself in the third person), his wife Tweet Aldana, and a host of volunteers took on photography and videography duties. This resulted in 9,454 pictures and 1,101 (more than 11 hours) of video clips, captured with just about every device imaginable in a multitude of formats.

Aldana had media from professional and consumer camcorders, DSLRs, compact cameras, and even smartphones. "I had to deal with different aspect ratios, frame rates, formats, containers, and codecs," said Aldana. "Plus, I had to work fast, churning out content as regularly as possible, in order to sustain momentum on social media."

And he had to do all of this while working on the bread-and-butter projects that pay the rent. "All of this would have amounted to a real post-production nightmare," said Aldana. "Fortunately, I have the right tool for the job."

Solution

"A videocam is my paintbrush and EDIUS is my canvas."

With the ability to work natively with just about any kind of media you throw at it, EDIUS from Grass Valley, a Belden Brand, made the sheer volume of footage somewhat less daunting for Aldana.

"I had over 200 GB of material to go through. Sometimes I'd just rummage through an Explorer window, and if I saw something I liked, I'd drag it straight to the timeline and be done with it. That's the power of EDIUS."

Aldana shot interviews "run-and-gun" style on a Sony Cyber-shot DSC-RX100, a compact camera based around a 20 megapixel 1-inch CMOS sensor and recorded audio separately on a Zoom H4n digital recorder, primarily with a RØDE NTG-1 with RØDE's Dead Cat windscreen and sometimes with a Zoom H1.

"When cutting interview footage, I'd drop the whole lot on to the timeline and sync up the audio with Red Giant's PluralEyes," said Aldana. "I'd then use comments on the sequence marker window to transcribe the interviews. Sometimes I would export the sequence marker list as a .csv file and print it out to make a paper edit while I'm AFK (because getting away from keyboard is at times necessary to preserve one's sanity).

"Once the edit was all buttoned up, I'd export it, upload it to my YouTube channel, take a nap, and wake up to the sound of ensuing awesomeness," jokes Aldana.

Aldana has been editing for more than two decades. He's used linear analog tape-based systems, some strange analog/digital hybrids, and a whole bunch of early NLEs "that went extinct in the 1990s."

In 2007, he bought a Canopus Storm XA card with EDIUS 3 bundled with it. He tried it out and never looked back.

"I suffer from a condition known as Render Aversion — it's like ADHD for editors," said Aldana. "Having to render something over and over again can launch me into a psychotic rage. Seriously though, real-time editing capability is a big deal. It allows me to focus on storytelling instead of 'working' an interface… and storytelling is at the core of what we do. In fact, I'd say the best feature of EDIUS is the play button. The play button works, and it works every single time it's used. It's no surprise that the EDIUS logo IS the play button."

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Benefits

For Aldana, there are two big benefits to using EDIUS: its agnostic timeline that can handle almost any format, and the ability to output just about any kind of media you could possibly need.

EDIUS also gives Aldana customizability options galore. "I'm a bit of a control freak when it comes to editing. I like that EDIUS gives me the flexibility to be as obsessive-compulsive as I need to be." Add to that a stable and reliable platform that has never given Aldana a "white-knuckle" moment, and you have a system that you can trust.

But when it comes to features, the real lifesavers are the Grass Valley HQ and HQX codecs.

"These codecs rock. Image quality is great, they don't hog system resources, and the fact that they can hold an alpha channel makes it my first choice for compositing work," said Aldana. "I render out individual motion graphics elements with an alpha channel and do my layouts in EDIUS in real time. It allows me to mix and match elements and/or change the background layer to create permutations on the fly.

"This is what I had to do for one particularly tricky project. I needed to create 80 minutes of content for a video wall 11 feet high and almost a hundred feet long. And I had two weeks to do it.

"I created a 3696x480 project and composed motion graphics elements rendered out to HQX. It played out flawlessly in real time. Final output files were encoded to H.264 and processed on a Dataton WATCHOUT multi-display production and playback system for the event. Everything was delivered ahead of time, so there was ample time for revisions. In my opinion, it would have been impossible to create that much content in such a short amount of time on any other NLE."

When asked if there was anything else important about editing, The-Frank passed along some sage advice:

"A comfortable chair with adjustable arm rests are an editor's best friend. Adjust the arm rest to be flush with the table and keep your mousing hand level. This has saved me from a world of hurt. And take your fat wallet out of your back pocket when editing. Your lower back will thank you."

The walls along Camp Aguinaldo on the EDSA (the military headquarters of the Philippine Army and the Armed Forces of the Philippines) was the site of the 1986 People Power Revolution that ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos. It was the first peaceful revolution. The first of many that would be replicated around the world.

In a sense, it is fitting that these walls shall again be the flashpoint of a new revolution for peace. Once completed, the EDSA Peace Mural will be the longest peace mural in the world…but not for long. Already, plans are underway to bring the peace mural project to other parts of the Philippines. The Filipinos' collective hope is that it extends beyond their shores, to countries all over the world, so that no walls can divide us.

"I've been using EDIUS since version 3.0 and it's never given me a 'white-knuckle' moment. In fact, I've had occasions when I came to the rescue of editors using other NLE systems who couldn't output their timelines in time for client presentations."

TheFrank Aldana, Director/Editor/VFX/Voiceover artist, Red Ei8ht Inc.

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