

Zurich facility using eQ to do exactly what it says on the tin

November 03

Just for the moment, let's imagine you made a film in India.



Max Ophul's seminal Lola Montes - another superb Swiss Effects' restoration

A typical Indian film in fact, full of exuberance, larger than life characters, tension, drama, emotion, humour and that dash of the exotic that Western audiences love. Let's say you then call it *The Monsoon Wedding* and, once it's in the can, you send the Super16 film over to the USA for development. Job done, you think. But then you find out that four minutes of your material has been damaged by the x-ray machine at customs. That's four minutes of crucial scenes, including the rather pivotal wedding itself, that are going to be difficult if not impossible to reproduce. It's then that you're glad you know people like Zurich-based Swiss Effects who restored the damaged frames, plus another three minutes ruined by scratches and hairs in the gate, to their former Bollywood-flavoured glory.

Swiss Effects betrays that national genius for naming in Switzerland that brought the world the Swiss Army Knife (a knife used by the Swiss Army). It's an effects company, unsurprisingly, albeit one that grew out of the original optical business started by Ruedi Schick back in 1986. Since then the company has been gradually moving into the digital arena, notably with the development of two in-house CRT-based systems for video to film and 2k transfer, latterly augmented with an ARRI Laser.

Enter eQ

The most recent addition to the Swiss Effects armoury is Quantel's HD finishing and effects editing system, eQ. Why the eQ? According to Schick, both quality and the machine's AAF support were high up on the list.



Swiss Effects' Ruedi Schick & Jens Volkmann

"Until now we have been using our own specially developed HD solution which has produced high quality output," he says. "But when I saw the eQ, I was immediately deeply impressed by its fantastic quality, its flying speed at HD and especially its openness. I realised that this would provide a real step forward for us. The clincher was its resolution co-existence, which opens up new opportunities for us in emerging mixed format work, including 24P HD mastering, restoration and DVD pre-production. We can mix material of any resolution in the same edit without the need to partition disks, restart the system or pre-convert media to the target resolution and so produce first generation quality results whatever the output required. None of Quantel's competitors can do this, and for me and my team this was the most significant purchase criterion."

Swiss Effects's Graphic Designer, Jens Volkmann, meanwhile, is impressed by the eQ's sheer speed. "The system is so fast it offers many opportunities to a creative operator and provides us with an optimum uncomplicated workflow. Quantel has always been the best company for technical innovation, but its systems were a bit too closed before. Now with generationQ everything has changed: the systems are open, scalable and from a technical point of view brilliant. We are happy and very proud that we have integrated one of these state-of-the-art systems in Zurich in a heterogeneous network which guarantees perfect and fast data input and output."

QColor and restoration

Another important factor in Swiss Effects' decision to go with eQ was the availability of the QColor in-context colour grader. As evidenced by the *Monsoon Wedding* story, film restoration represents a significant part of the company's work, and QColor's flexible toolset and excellent ergonomics means that it can offer its customers an even better and faster service than before.

HD is the way of the future, and eQ gives us the platform to take full advantage of the opportunities as they develop, says Ruedi Schick. "Alongside this, though, film restoration has always been a part of our business. The QColor grading facility we have integrated with our eQ means that we can really power through this kind of work, and blended with our extensive experience this will enable Swiss Effects to offer our international customer base the highest quality and fastest results in the business."

Volkman too is enthusiastic about QColor in combination with eQ, tossing out words and phrases such as reliability, stability, intuitive tools, innovative technology and - very flattering this - perfect support. It's a system in other words that gives Swiss Effects a great degree of power and flexibility in addressing the needs of its customers and one that it plans to push to the limits too.

"We are planning many new things everywhere, in animation, video or film post production transfer to film or post production in highest resolution," says Schick. "We will continue to work internationally and, with our new Quantel suite, we are very well prepared for this business."