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VIDEO EDITOR

Media 100 HD Version 12

by Michael Hanish

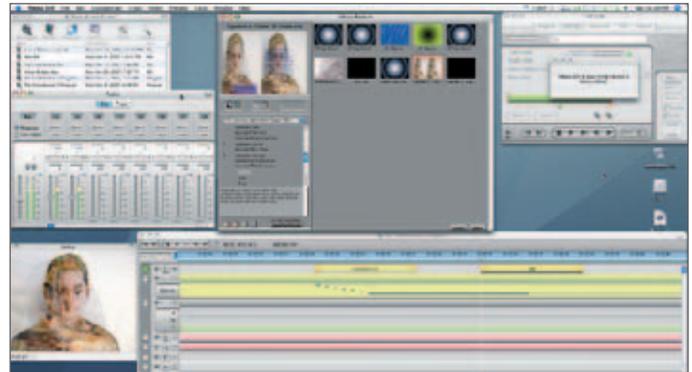
Many of us cut our nonlinear teeth on Media 100 systems, being attracted to the platform for its excellent image quality, low price and easy-to-use and open interface. Then, simultaneously, two things happened: The market changed radically with the introduction of more powerful processors and some software-only nonlinear editor applications such as Media 100 (the editing platform) began a long migration between corporate homes, languishing in both development and advertising support. As a result, many editors moved away from Media 100 as a viable platform. However, a couple of years ago the soap opera (or adventure saga) continued when Boris FX (the company) bought Media 100 (the application). This was a fitting and somewhat ironic turn of events, as Boris Yamnitsky, the head of the Boris FX company)

had previously been associated with Media 100, and in the intervening years had built Boris FX into a multi-platform image processing, compositing and special effects powerhouse. This entire prelude is by way of saying that Media 100 is back and developing nicely, very nicely indeed.

FEATURES

The recent introduction of Media 100 HD Version 12 gives us a great opportunity to take a look around the re-invented platform and check out its merits and applications. Media 100 is now available in three flavors (or input/output options and feature sets) of Macintosh-only hardware-based configurations and two versions of the application in a software-only configuration. Both of the latter provide the same interface and editing methodology (refined but essentially unchanged over the years). Both hardware and software versions are heavily dependent on the host computer's processor and graphics card power to do the bulk of the work. This is a major departure from earlier incarnations of Media 100, which were paired with a proprietary, internal I/O and codec card.

The software versions are known as Media 100 Producer and Producer Suite. The former includes Boris Graffiti 5.1 and Boris FX 9.1 for titling, transitions and effects; the latter adds Boris Red 4.2 for high-powered compositing, filters, and 2.5 D work. The Producers pack-



The Media 100 editor user interface

ages are not intended as full featured, standalone field editors, as they are limited to Firewire I/O and P2 ingest. However, they will work quite nicely with any footage at any resolution made with any installed codec, and will perform to the extent of the host system and attached storage.

The hardware based Media 100 systems are built around AJA-manufactured OEM boards, paralleling AJA's Mac-based lineup (This means that if you already have a Kona 3, LHe, or LSe board, you have the basis for a Media 100 HD system and can upgrade to the software for a reasonable cost—call Media 100 sales for more information.) As with Producer, the flavors of hardware-based Media 100 HD are differentiated primarily by I/O and hardware options, and secondarily by additional software capabilities.

The HD Suite is built around the Kona 3 card, which features digital I/O (dual link 4:4:4 HD-SDI, SDI, six channels of embedded audio, eight channels of AES audio), analog component output (12-bit HD or SD), machine control, hardware based, broadcast quality up-, down-, and cross-conversion, and the Composite Suite of add-on software

FAST FACTS

Application

Video editing

Key Features

Available in several configurations; real-time, clip-based color correction; good audio support and functionality

Price

Media 100 Producer, \$895; Producer Suite, \$1,295; HD Suite, \$5,995; Media 100 HD, \$3,495; Media 100 SDe, \$2,495

Contact

Media 100
800-922-3220
www.media100.com

(basically Boris Red, well integrated into the workflow, as described below). Media 100 HDe, built around the OEM version of the Kona LHe board, features a mix of digital and analog video and audio I/O for both HD and SD formats, hardware-based cross-conversion, machine control, and the integrated Title and Effects Suites, which add keying capabilities, use of AfterEffects filters, lighting, vector paint and advanced compositing modes (functionally similar to Boris Graffiti and FX packages). Media 100 SDe, based on an OEM version of the Kona LSe board, is an SD only package, with digital and analog video and audio I/O machine control, genlock and the Title Suite package. All hardware versions include a rackmount breakout box and software drivers provided by AJA that integrate the hardware seamlessly with the Media 100 software.

The Media 100 editing application has been undergoing a slow but steady evolution and development since its acquisition by Boris FX.

For years, and at its core, the Media 100 editor is an A/B roll-based application, with a wide range of customizable transitions. Since the crew at Boris has resumed development of the program, it has gotten up to 99 overlay tracks, which can contain video, graphics, or titles, and can each have an adjustable (keyframeable) opacity and/or color or luma keying. These tracks will play in real time up to the limits of the host system's processing power and the storage system's read/write rates. On an Intel MacPro that has been seven to 10 SD tracks or two to three HD tracks before the need to render kicks in. Media 100 also features real-time, clip-based color correction.

There are up to 24 audio tracks available, each with keyframeable pan and level controls. Automation can be set with the mixer, or by making nodes in the pan and level areas of each track. One of the best features of Media 100's audio handling are the audio filters. These provide a wide selection of customizable EQ presets based around parametric and shelving EQ filters that can be applied to individual audio clips. In addition, there is a master audio track to shape the entire mix. This can be outfitted with EQ, compressor, reverb, de-esser, volume controls and automation. All of these filters sound excellent, are flexible and are very useful, really some of the best on the market.

You can mix different codecs in the same timeline, which is a real time saver. And Media 100 is an open, QuickTime-based system,

which makes it easy to interface with other applications, such as After Effects (there's an XML, project-based importer supplied for this).

New features in this most recent version include Leopard (OSX 10.5) support, 720/24p support, and deeper integration with other Boris software components. This last new feature is especially significant and helpful, as it provides access to a library of title present templates, as well as the ability to apply Boris FX filters (including blurs, particle systems, lighting effects, and others) to clips in the timeline. Not only is this a huge timesaver, but is also a major developmental advance.

IN USE

Regardless, what it always all comes down to is using the application. Granted, personal preferences play a huge role in how easy and/or pleasant an application is to use; we will try to look at the user experience as subjectively as possible.

Colleague and friend Rawn Fulton (Searchlight Films and Dennis Powers Productions) used Media 100 Producer running on a year-old MacBook Pro to edit and produce a complex 11 minute piece. This was done in high-definition DVCPROHD, with footage originally shot on a Panasonic HVX200 and transferred into Media 100 natively from P2 cards. This was prepared for the New York Historical Society, and the finished, color-corrected product was presented at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine from the same laptop and a Firewire 800 array. I worked extensively with Rawn in setting up the workflow, which turned out to be fairly straightforward, as we are both long-time Media 100 users (and also as the system is so easy to use). I then assisted with graphics, color correction, titling and shot stabilization issues. Getting clips into and out of any Media 100 system is very easy, due to very solid import and export support. Individual clips, sequences, ranges, and/or whole program timelines can be imported or exported, or in the case of After Effects, be exported as XML, preserving each video and audio clip and transition. All color correction was done within Media 100, and even though it was put together from a variety of footage (ranging from HVX200 to various Sony HDV cameras to SD video and miscellaneous graphics sources) had a very consistent and rich look.

Ditto with the audio mix. Even though Media 100 is not Pro Tools or the like for audio, it was easy to do the complex mix from

numerous sources recorded in a wide variety of sonic landscapes. The final mix came together into a unified whole quickly, using EQ filters for each clip and shaping the overall mix with dynamics/compression and EQ in a master audio track, all in real time with no rendering.

When the edit was complete and approved, we brought the program to my Media 100 HD Suite-equipped studio for output by simply copying the program and bins onto the external Firewire 800 array and plugging that into my system. The program loaded and ran flawlessly and we were able to easily output a real-time hardware down-res version to tape with no rendering or hiccups of any sort. This kind of portability and flexibility blew us both away.

SUMMARY

In the past couple of years, the small development team at Media 100/Boris have (among other things) made the application compatible with Intel processors. And now they've added a new Leopard OS, additional video/graphics layers, integrated filters and titling templates, additional support for 24p modes. Further, the workflow has generally been sped up and slimmed down. There is more work to be done—including the addition of 5.1 audio support—to bring the Media 100 HD platform back into full feature contention with other platforms. Overall, it is quite amazing (and instructive) to see how Media 100's development has come along recently, with features being added slowly but steadily, and extremely intelligently. They've patiently updated what was necessary to bring the platform back into the modern marketplace, adding and refining features methodically and leveraging the software assets and capabilities of Boris Graffiti, FX and RED.

They have done all this and kept the price of both the hardware-based and software-only packages very reasonable. For those who prefer Media 100's clean and uncluttered interface and extensive feature set, this is all very good news. For those who have moved to other editing platforms, it is definitely time to take a peek back into Media 100 and see how it all looks. For those looking to set up a Mac-based suite, a look at the new Media 100 HD is more than worth the effort: Media 100 has reconstituted itself as a full featured, efficient, fast, and price and value worthy editing platform.

Michael Hanish operates Free Lunch, a video/audio/multimedia production house near Guilford, Vt. He may be contacted at michael@freelunchmedia.com.