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May/June 2000

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Max CiVon, Sharyn Lane & Del Shores merge tradition with technology

Texas Tales

Barry Corbin highlights the history & personalities that make Texas legendary



Iron Butterfly

HighDef is King!

Robert Swope and Christopher Toyne pave the way for the future.

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Editor's Statement

There isn't an artist alive who doesn't strive for perfection in his craft. Year after year he/she will aspire to greater heights pushing the boundaries of originality and creativity. Artists will go to great lengths to discover new paints, buy a new lens, or acquire the latest in technology to help them immortalize their work of art.

HighDef. Org, our national magazine, is here to say, the film world has it, the latest in cutting edge tools to help the filmmaker achieve his/her dreams.

Now artists can capture their hard work, their precious creations, on High Definition, the archiving medium of the future. Christopher Toyne and Robert Swope of Sunrise Entertainment attest to this fact. You will read about their success filming musicians on HD. Texas Tales and Sordid Lives are two terrific productions shot exclusively in HD. Read about their exciting beginnings. And a special thanks to Tom Fletcher for his TechTalk article this month.

May all your shoots be in HighDef,

Laura Nielson

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"There are not many things you can really count on these days, however I can safely say that Fletcher Chicago is one of them."

Bob Berg - Director of Photography
Steadicam Operator
Palindrome Productions - Detroit

"So much in this business is about being creative while being dependent on hardware: a mixture of artistry and engineering. Fletcher Chicago helps me achieve that delicate balance. Their expertise and dependability allow me to focus more on the creative process and worry less about the technology. For nearly 15 years, I have found Fletcher to be superior to other sales and rental houses in service and value. When I ventured into my own business Fletcher was there to guide me in my investment from my Sony camera to the microphones and lighting gear. They've become a reliable resource in keeping up with new equipment and techniques especially the latest 'toys' that make things easier to 'do the trick.' As I got started with high definition, they helped educate me by sharing the results of their various HD tests like the Tiffen Filter test. This valuable information helped guide me down the right path technically and artistically. To me, Fletcher is a true production partner. They stand behind their equipment and are available 24 hours a day. Whether I'm in a studio or on location overseas, I know that with one phone call to Fletcher I can solve any problem. They are always there for me and I value that peace of mind."

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16x9 Productions Produces HDTV Content for Paw Island Entertainment

When Paw Island Entertainment decided they needed a special way to promote their books, CDs, toys, and clothing lines to children, they turned to the talents of 16x9 and HD Vision.

"Paw Island Entertainment was looking for a way to attract children and their parents to a new mall kiosk without using audio (which was prohibited). HDTV images of their animated characters and products, displayed on a flat panel, mounted atop the kiosk was a perfect fit." Kristen Cox, President & CEO, 16x9 Productions.

16x9 Productions hired Randall Dark to direct the shoot and edited at HD Vision's facilities. Kristen Cox served as the program's producer and Kevin Caddell was brought on as the HDTV Engineer. Post production has been completed and the first panel will be installed shortly.

"As an entertainment company, we have been looking for ways to get our characters and concepts seen. . . and in a way that speaks volumes about the quality we're striving to attain. Of course, the technology is only as effective as the people using it, and, quite honestly, we would have been lost without the efforts and expert work of Kristen Cox, 16x9 Productions and Randall Dark," explains Corey Maxwell, CEO of Paw Island Entertainment.

In the past 3 months, HDTV programs produced by Kristen Cox for HD Vision have received (1) Summit Gold Award, (3) Telly Awards, (3) Communicator Awards and (2) Aurora Awards, including the Aurora Platinum



HD

Best In Show Award for Children's Programming for Bridge Dwellers: The Bats Of Austin. For more information, please call: (972)556-9161 or fax: (972)831-1794 ◆



HD



HD

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Fletcher Chicago: The HDTV Road Show

by Tom Fletcher, VP - Fletcher Chicago, Inc.

New technology has always had a way of drawing focus to the pioneers. High Definition is no different. This technology has caused the same rift in the industry as the introduction of color technology to television. Back in the 1960's, J. Walter Thompson recommended that its clients support color because, in the long run, the advertiser has the most to gain from the selling advantages of color imagery. JWT recognized the importance of its role as the agency to stick out its neck to better the means of communication for its client and future business. I believe the same is true today. It is the responsibility of the agency to stay ahead of the game. To lead its broadcast clients into new dimensions. That is why my company, Fletcher Chicago, Inc., has been going to the agencies for the past two years to help inform and educate them on HD. And finally, we are not alone. More and more post houses are now doing the same. It has taken a while for the agencies to express interest in HD. Perhaps they have been getting the wrong information. What director or post house that hasn't embraced HD is going to tell their client, "Yeah, HD is the best way - just go down the street. They have spent big bucks to have HD." We had one large advertiser ask us to give them a HD presentation after asking their agencies and not getting a satisfactory answer. Nonetheless the agencies that have welcomed our efforts are pleased with their initial encounter with HD. You can see it first in their eyes. They immediately light up. A smile usually crosses their lips. The person will take a few steps closer, to get a better look. It's not at all uncommon to hear them lightly whisper, "Wow." Some even yell it out. Then they usually turn to the people next to them to see if they are as amazed and transfixed by the images as they are. The answer is yes. I've witnessed the aforementioned reaction quite a lot lately: in small offices, corporate lobbies,

and large seminars. When Fletcher Chicago made the decision to be an early proponent of the High Definition format, I quickly realized that the most effective manner to demonstrate to people just how groundbreaking this new technology was going to be would be to bring it to them. Only until people actually see it with their own eyes can I make converts of them. So that's what I'm doing. My associate, Kevin O'Connor, and I have spent the better

"An agency can either wait until television ideas are brought to it, or it can, in concert with its clients, determine what it would like to see in television and then make it happen."

Dan Seymour - Director of J. Walter Thompson Radio and Television Department - Broadcast News Magazine, April 1961

part of the past year calling on ad agencies, production companies, and DP's-all sorts of people within the Chicago (and beyond) creative community. Now I will confess that lugging a 300 lb., 34" High Definition monitor around downtown offices can be a bit of a challenge, but it sure has been effective. Our stops on this little HDTV road show have included the likes of DDB-Chicago, Foote, Cone & Belding, and Leo Burnett. At Leo Burnett, Dave Beller, a Senior Vice President of TV Production, spent practically

the entire day watching reactions. Though a busy man, Dave confessed he wanted to see first hand the surprise of his co-workers as they would stroll into the presentation to see the High Definition pictures. Not only creatives and producers, but other Burnett employees quickly gathered round the Sony High Definition monitors to see the captivating HD images, including some P&G produced HD commercials. "This is unbelievable. It's like I'm looking out a window" is just a sample of the type of response we heard that day (and still hear every day). Like JWT, Leo Burnett was a leader in the last great television leap forward, having been one of the first agencies to produce spots in color and Beller wants the company to be just as forward looking in their approach to HD. Seeing the enthusiastic appraisals of his co-workers that afternoon only further shored up his convictions. Word of our "HD Road Show" spread beyond Chicago and soon Fallon-McElliott of Minneapolis asked for a presentation to their staff. We were again greeted with the same positive reaction we had experienced at the Chicago agencies. Fallon's interest in the format came about in large part because they're perennial Super Bowl advertisers. Ad agencies' interest and excitement about the format are almost certainly linked to HD's ability to make their clients' products look so good. Part of the HD test footage we have shown them includes a test spot showing beer being poured into a glass. The footage was captured using the new Sony 24p camera. It is so impressive, that SONY will be using the test in presentations at NAB 2000. The beer pour is an image we have seen time and again in commercials, but seeing it presented in High Definition drives home the format's visual advantages. The 24p captured all the liquid's textures and nuances, right down to the tiniest bubbles rising from

Continued on page 10...

The Tiffen Filter Test is an example of the type of tests conducted by Fletcher Chicago in its efforts to inform and educate agencies and production companies on HD.



HD

Clean location



HD

Clear



HD

Soft net black 3 & 812 #195



HD

Warm black pro mist half



the bottom of the glass. The effect is almost 3-dimensional. This footage is a hit with the agencies because the 3:2 pulldown look is a big aspect of the look and style adopted by agencies. The image is so true to life that the viewer can almost taste the beer, and isn't that exactly the desired effect advertisers crave? In October 1998, Fletcher Chicago hosted the Chicago High Definition Production Symposium at Essanay Studios. We like to think that event unofficially marked this community's entry into the High Definition arena. One of the most effective presentations was delivered by Proctor & Gamble's Jim Gosney, Associate Director of Commercial Production Advertising Development World Wide. Jim's message was simple: High

Definition allows companies to improve their communication with consumers. As proof of this, Jim offered a selection of HD spots that P&G had produced, including an amazing Mountain Spring Tide spot that had been shot with Sony's High Definition equipment by DP John Alonzo. The crisp resolution of this spot was remarkable.

Because High Definition (1080 lines) was able to capture the finer details that would just be lost in a conventional NTSC spot (with only 480 lines of resolution), it was easy to see why Jim and Proctor & Gamble were so excited about the medium. In Chicago, various directors, including David Deahl and Ted Bokoff, have taken an interest in HD. With Fletcher's assistance, they have conducted their

own tests to see how this new format holds up with various lighting and shooting techniques. They are preparing for the day when their agency clients ask for HD. For those who are skeptical about High Definition, I have some simple advice: be proactive and open-minded in learning about this exciting new format. Take a look at the footage and images for yourself. I'll be watching your eyes. Fletcher Chicago is a full-service HDTV, film and video rental and sales facility specializing in quality field acquisition equipment for the broadcast, production and film industries. For more information contact: Tom Fletcher, VP at 312.932-2700 or tfletch@fletch.com. or visit www.fletch.com. ♦

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HighDef is King!

Sunrise Entertainment's Producer/Director Robert Swope and Producer Christopher Toyne immortalize rock stars on HD.

by Laura Nielson

A major record company stood up and took notice when Robert Swope and Christopher Toyne of Sunrise Entertainment insisted on shooting *The Legends of Rock and Roll: Live From Itchycoo Park* in High Definition. It had been standard practice for music artists to entrust the immortalizing of their performances to 1", Betacam SP, Digi Beta, and three-quarter inch formats that may very well be obsolete in ten years. The video savvy, entrepreneurial producer/directors convinced their clients that shooting in HighDef was an investment for the future and would ultimately ensure archival value of priceless performances. Whether or not their clients saw them as HD evangelists, they were converted. Robert sermonized, "HighDef is the best. It's king. If you can shoot 1920 x 1080, I'm there. It is better than 35mm and as a live director I can't live switch twelve Arriflex 35 mm cameras, but I can live switch twelve HDCAMs."

Sunrise Entertainment cut a 90-minute version of *The Legends of Rock and Roll: Live from Itchycoo Park* for the Japanese television market, which broadcasts eighteen hours a day in HighDef. They have also completed editing a two-hour version, from this extensive 60's, 70's, and 80's Rock and Roll HD library, for the US and European markets, complete with revealing interviews with the band, to be distributed by EuroArts Entertainment GmbH worldwide.

For the final touches Toyne and Swope visited Seattle. Simultaneously, they were working out of Discreet Logic in LA loading a boatload of footage into a three-terabyte system called Fire. One of the thirteen layers on the front end of the show is the edited version of seven forty-minute



Styx in concert at Itchycoo Park

reels of tape edited into time lapse photography while the stage was being constructed. "We took that Digi Beta 16x9 wide screen format and loaded it all in real time into their Fire system and sped it up 17,500 percent smashing what took a week into 28 seconds. And that has become one layer within the program opening the show," Christopher revealed. "We had to rotoSCOPE things. You name it; we pushed the Fire System to its limit. As we finished cutting video in New York, Leamon Gamel, our audio producer/

mixer, remastered our master audio tapes of music, the DA-88's, in Santa Monica Ocean Way's main room on a Sony Oxford console. For the final touch we visited Seattle to let wonderful Nick Denke, of American Production Services, play with it." Nick re-mixed the audio into a 5.1 AC-3 Dolby Digital Surround mix. This required mixing the audio response mics into the surround channels with the music. The Online was completed at American

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HD

Styx in concert at Itchycoo Park

So why would anyone shoot in anything but HighDef if they were thinking of the future?



Styx in concert at Itchycoo Park

to happen in the States so, why shoot 4x3 to only have it completely unusable and unsalable in the next four to five years?"

Despite Christopher's and Robert's unbridled enthusiasm for HD, they do see two problems. "There is a scarcity that causes a mark up. HighDef tape can cost 50 dollars a reel more from city to city. Another problem is that HighDef has 'to be seen to be believed.' When we are trying to raise capital, it is hard to describe a color to a prospective investor that they have never seen. It means wheeling in a \$75,000 to a \$100,000 player recorder and an \$18,000 plasma screen. Who can afford it?"

"Despite these obstacles, the holy grail is going to be 1080 progressive and that's why we are working in High Definition in any standard that we can get as long as it will be compatible with 1080 progressive when it comes to our TV screens. Bandwidth is everything. Within the next five years it will improve. The 6 MHz bandwidth may be increased or required to give everybody the capability of carrying HighDef. We believe that the new generation of plasma screens will be able to interpolate any signal that hits it: SECAM, HighDef, NTSC, PAL. Our computers will go wide screen and we'll be able to shoot it up onto a plasma screen on a wall or ceiling just as we will any HighDef with the 6 MHz bandwidth. If you boot a signal over a bootlace, you'll be able to put it in a bootlace socket. As soon as HighDef comes down in price for the consumer to buy, television stations will be driven by the consumer. For now, DVD is going to drive that market for the next two years."

Christopher began his career with the BBC in England where he learned every aspect of producing and directing from radio to drama, live soaps, and television movies to live multi-camera shoots. Christopher has lived and worked in Hollywood since 1984 where he produced the well-known series, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Nightmare Classics* with Shelley Duvall, *Dinner at Eight* starring Lauren Bacall, TNT's *Diana*, *The People's Princess*, and *Englebert Humperdink's 25th Anniversary Tour*, to name a few. Shortly after the *Humperdink* tour, Christopher met Robert, in Las Vegas.

Robert had been a musical child prodigy performing

Production Services' HD Land.

"Resolution wise, High Definition is somewhere between 35mm and 70mm, yet we can live switch it. Previously I'd shot flowers and mating elk like everybody else in HD," Robert mused, "but now, Sunrise Entertainment shoots all our family entertainment and music in HighDef. We've been watching Hollywood where every film and intellectual property is run through IVC (International Video Conversions) located in North Hollywood. They clean it up digitally and master it in HighDef." So why would anyone shoot in anything but HighDef if they were thinking of the future? This revolution alone will ini-

tially drive the DVD and High Definition broadcast market. Although Japan is an interesting market, Christopher and Robert are futurists shooting in HighDef to archive. They recognize that Madison Avenue currently views commercials in letterbox format as being "cute" and "chic". According to Christopher, "The kids are driving the letterbox format in rentals and DVD is driving the letterbox." Very soon the 16x9 format, which approximates 1.85 film aspect ratio, is going to be the demand. It has already happened in Europe, even in the smallest villages. Christopher adds, with wise counsel, "In Spain you're seeing it in wide screen, broadcast in the 16x9 ratio. It's going

his accordion and trumpet. He played with the Atlanta Symphony, toured with Buddy Rich, and played his banjo with Bill Monroe. During his late teens and early twenties he played in bands for eight to ten hours a day. Soon he started lighting the stage and mixing the sound to ensure a quality performance. When he enrolled in Georgia Tech he was asked to choreograph their 400 piece marching band and to play lead trumpet. After graduation, Robert was hired to choreograph the American Bowl, the Sugar Bowl, and the Gator Bowl and set records when he choreographed 1,000 to 3,700 piece marching bands for these events. The NFL took notice and asked him to be their entertainment producer. "During this process, I got into the filming and fell in love with live direction. It is basically better than sex," Robert pronounced

Now meeting for the first time in Las Vegas, Robert and Christopher found that they were in opposing camps and pitted against each other by two black hearted businessmen trying to drive down their directorial prices. They looked at one another and said, "Don't think so, let's have a cup of coffee." Christopher asked Robert, who was the sole owner of Sunrise Entertainment, to produce the George Winston Seasons in Concert. "It was a rare time working with a crew that was utterly enjoyable. BMG just released it in DVD. PBS adored it and used it as a pledge special in 1996," Christopher gushed with enthusiasm.

There are six secrets to Sunrise Entertainment's tremendous success with documenting and producing music programs as works of art. Firstly, they script each production and each piece of music, a practice rarely followed, if ever, in the music industry. Secondly, Robert carefully selects outstanding crews. Thirdly, Robert and Christopher insist on quality talent to film. For example, George Winston is simply intriguing and according to Christopher, "He's a mystery wrapped in a riddle surrounded by an enigma and coated in a conundrum." Their fourth secret to success is their uncanny ability to unlock the inner personalities of a talent, allowing them to radiate in a compelling work of art. They were inspired to take George Winston back to his "school room feelings" where he had

Continued on next page...



Paul Rodgers performs at Itchycoo Park



Paul Rodgers

grown up in Billings, Montana. Christopher and Robert set the stage so that when George sat down in front of his piano in subdued light, it allowed him to open up like a blossoming flower. His music seemed to reflect the inspiring hundred shades of gray in the Montana sky. Everything George said during this filming was carefully woven into the script. Fifthly, they are innovators. When they filmed Winston at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Robert made a brilliant move. He lit the outside of the auditorium by focusing eight 10K's on the original, 1900's old church's, stained glass windows. This lighting and the reverse shots created a sacred feeling about this talented pianist. It was also Robert's way of indirectly lighting the audience. It meant two more generators outside, permits, and buying an entire parking lot, but the outcome was stunning. Sixthly, according to Toyne, "Robert makes all of the creative editing decisions on an Avid before entering a HighDef suite. He is the fastest editor I have ever known. Since he is also the director of our shows, he feels every cut like a choreographer feeling every step of the dance he has created. His decisions set our shows apart."

The George Winston show cemented Christopher and Robert's alliance bringing Toyne into Sunrise Entertainment as a partner. Last July, Robert directed his first High Definition multicamera shoot, and also the first ever in Canada with The Moffatts for Capitol Records. This



Paul Rodgers

February Toyne and Swope made headlines documenting The Fabulous Thunderbirds by broadcasting them in the first HighDef, multi-camera recording and live Webcast out of L.A. Late spring or early summer Sunrise Entertainment will be filming the inventor of the Twist, Chubby Checker. Everybody from Cher to Michael Jackson will be a part of this historic HighDef concert. They are also scheduled to work with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic in St. Petersburg later this year. In the past Sunrise produced The Greatest Magicians - Las Vegas Series, and The International Circus of Budapest. "We've even shot dancing pigs," laughs Robert. Interestingly, Christopher also owns the rights for the unabridged works of Winnie-the-Pooh for radio offering 18 half-hours which have already garnered

a Peabody nomination, two Parent Choice Awards, and an Ohio State Award, Radio's Oscar.

Sunrise Entertainment is breaking down barriers by evangelizing on behalf of High Definition in the music world. But rather than saving souls, they are saving priceless musical performances that will be enjoyed for generations to come. ♦

Christopher Toyne and Robert Swope can be reached at: (615)376-0590, fax: (615)376-3562, e-mails: Swope@SunriseEntertainment.com or Toyne@SunriseEntertainment.com



Max CiVon

The Sordid History

by Sara Brite

Produced by: Sharyn Lane, Max CiVon,
Victoria Alonso & J. Todd Harris
Written and Directed by: Del Shores
Director of Photography: Max CiVon
Edited by: Ed Marx

Flash back to June 1999. To find Max CiVon searching for a picture to photograph and testing High Definition techniques for transfer to film. Del Shores is pitching his movie, *Sordid Lives* and Shores' partner, Sharyn Lane, who has been working for several years to raise the project's original \$3,000,000 budget is running out of options. Shores and Lane have reached

a point of frustration with their beloved project. Enter Newell Alexander, actor and mutual friend of both Shores and CiVon. With Alexander as liaison, the connection is made, a meeting is set, creative forces converge and the project is propelled forward.

Flash forward seven months. The finished film is projected, for the first time, to a studio theatre audience of over 500 amazed viewers. It is only seven months later and the project has proved successful. The film's budget has come in at well under a million. When shooting began, the producers had only enough money to start their film, but as the movie gained momentum, additional investors found confidence. And these High Definition pioneers were able to gather funds for the entire post-production budget while only midway through the shooting schedule. The movie is now on the festival circuit and is represented by one of Hollywood's top agencies.

There lies a bit of irony in the above High Definition success story: Cutting-edge technology was not a priority for Del Shores during the project's incubation period. His focus, as a classical director, fell on the actors and his script, not the technology. Both Shores and Lane, a music publisher, shared this view.

Continued on next page...



Clockwise from left: Ann Walker, Sarah Hunley, Max CiVon, Delta Burke

Starring in Alphabetical order: Newell Alexander, Rosemary Alexander, Bonnie Bedelia, Beau Bridges, Earl H. Bullock, Delta Burke, Kirk Geiger, Beth Grant, Sarah Hunley, Leslie Jordan, Olivia Newton-John & Ann Walker.

“I give a lot of credit to the Sony M-mode-video to film process. The Sony Studio HD facility and their staff are just great.”

– Max CiVon



Olivia Newton-John

So how then, did Digital Cinematographer Max CiVon connect with such an unlikely team? One word: frustration. Shores and Lane had exhausted most of the traditional avenues for raising funds and thus were open to new ideas and technology. Shores and Lane brought the money they had raised, and the commitment of stars Beau Bridges and Olivia Newton-John, while CiVon brought the new shooting ideas to the table. It was agreed that CiVon should take the lead role during production among the producing group which included Lane, Victoria Alonso and J. Todd Harris because of his specific knowledge of this process.

CiVon saw the cinematic potential within the script

and could see that this project was a great vehicle for HighDef and its benefits. Further, when CiVon advised Shores and Lane that the funds that they already had secured were enough to start production, things immediately began to move forward. Shores' desire to originate on film melted away, and a reluctant director embraced a mysterious technology. The turning point came when Cicon explained that he considered HighDef a producing technique, not a recording format. "From the moment that concept was understood, we have never looked back," said CiVon.

HighDef is rich in time-saving benefits. "It's the pro-

ducer part of my brain who loves the speed and flexibility of HD," says CiVon. He is an advocate for available light, such as windows and practicals, and because High Definition, and video in general, works so well in mixed lighting, he was able to use the available light. Shores and CiVon would discuss how they wanted to cover a given scene, then Shores would give his director's notes to the actors, and CiVon would set to work on angles and lighting. Max would preset lights with a single camera so that the master shot would cut with secondary angles and the entire scene was covered with ten minute camera changes. This

Continued on page 20...

“It’s the producer part of my brain who loves the speed and flexibility of HD.”

– Max CiVon



HD

Ann Walker and Delta Burke



HD

Leslie Jordan

“With HighDef’s playback capability, the cast was able to view so much good footage after a week that they just trusted the process.”

– Max CiVon



HD

Left to right: Earl H. Bullock, Sarah Hunley, Beau Bridges

was just long enough for the actors to get their make-up checked, but not so long that they would lose the emotional meaning of the scene. Editor Ed Marx expressed his gratitude and amazement with how well the movie cut: “With few exceptions, it (the shot) was always there.”

Shooting faster also meant there was more time available to shoot additional coverage. Many filmmakers are able to relate to wanting another take, or a different angle, but not being able to afford the film stock or the time to re-light.

Delta Burke, Olivia, and, in fact, all the actors on the movie, were concerned with how they were going to look. Lower-budget films can be a concern for actors. Often crews move too quickly and with too little lighting. With HighDef’s playback capability, the cast was able to view so much good footage after a week that they just trusted the process.

Another great benefit is continuity. Shooting faster, in HighDef allows for great continuity. The actor finds the emotional meaning of a scene in the wide shot, and the way we worked, they could hold it in coverage and reactions. There was no sending the actors back to their trailers for an hour of re-light only to have them forget wardrobe, props and where their hands were.

Keeping the actors hot, saving time, getting more angles, using a smaller crew, using available light, saving the cost of film stock, etc., these are all great reasons to shoot High Definition. However, the best reason of all is picture quality. CiVon wanted to do something different. He ventured to shoot a digital film that looks like it originated on 35mm-an HD film that was free from all the video ringing, lines of enhancement and noise artifacts. Max CiVon said, when asked, “Others will have to judge the film’s quality, and even its place in digital cinema history, it’s not for me to say, but as of the date of this interview, no one has shown me a single video artifact in the 110 minute film. I am proud of that and how it looks.” ♦



Bonnie Bedelia and Gloria LeRoy

Texas Tales

by Melanie Wester

DALLAS -Texas Tales & Legends, hosted by native Texan and veteran actor Barry Corbin, highlights the history and personalities that make the Lone Star State legendary around the world. The pilot episode focuses on the life of legendary gambler Lester "Benny" Binion, who sowed more than a few of his wild oats in Fort Worth and Dallas before achieving fame and fortune as founder of the Horseshoe Casino in Las Vegas. The series, created by VAST Productions of Dallas, is also one of the first to implement the High Definition format throughout its production process.

Executive Producer Del Bryant says, "By combining the craft of documentary filmmaking with the art of storytelling, Texas Tales & Legends brings to life compelling stories ranging from the Old West exploits of the Chisholm Trail cattle barons to the legendary adventures of the Texas Rangers. Stories that show courage and bravery even in the face of insurmountable odds. The swagger and pride that comes from every Texan as they talk about



Shane Petterman

their state will come through every episode of TT&L."

The high quality of HD was the selling point for Del. He revealed, "I come from a film background and was apprehensive about shooting a show like this on anything other than film." He also said, "When I saw the finished images that our crew had achieved, I was immediately sold on HD." Director Andrew Librizzi said, "Because of the vibrant picture quality, the HD format not only offers the cost efficiency of video production, but an artistic dimension normally associated with film. R. Scott Wilson,

the director of photography, and I had a blast testing the camera in order to see what it could do in various settings. In each case, we were blown away! Although there are a few limitations, the HD format greatly enhanced the dramatic scenes of the docudrama."

"When watching Texas Tales and Legends it is easy to see that not only are the HD images so brilliant, but that the 5.1 surround sound audio seems to pull you into the picture and really complete the HighDef experience. Reds just seem to jump out of the pictures, and subtle nuances



HD

Mary Gilbreath, Sam Presley and Shane Petterman

in color are there and not washed out," says Del Bryant. The Benny Binion story for TT&L is the first of a weekly series for which the producers are currently seeking syndication. The episode has been widely accepted for its daring use of HD and its maverick production. WFAA(Belo Broadcasting) in January of this year was the first station to broadcast TT&L on their HD channel. The

producers of the show have been approached by several industry giants to use the show to demonstrate what their HD equipment can do.

To arrange an interview with one of our producers, or to schedule an appointment please call Executive Producers Del Bryant or Melanie Wester at Vast Productions / 12 Forward 214- 855-0050. ♦

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