

## WORKING WITH THE RED

I did some research a few months ago on budgeting for shooting on the Red camera and on its ilk (the Phantom, which was out earlier). The bottom line: if you want a quality image that can be endlessly tweaked in post, you're in luck, BUT don't think that the Red is the white knight that will save your indie film budget.

## PEOPLE

You absolutely need to budget for two days of checkout time for your ENTIRE camera crew and ASSISTANT EDITOR. This will give them enough time to check the gear out at the rental house and one day to play with it. During this second day, your assistant editor should be loading up the drives or cards into the laptop using RedAlert! or RedCine so you can see what you've shot.

1. DP 2 days labor
2. 1st AC 2 days labor
3. 2nd AC 2 days labor
3. Assistant Editor 2 days labor

## STORAGE

4K data takes up a LOT of storage space. So budget for an array of hard drives. For a feature shot at a 20:1 ratio (not unusual on an HD feature, as opposed to film) you're looking at:

1. 107GB 1 hour of footage (this is going by Red's own estimates)
2. 20:1 40 hours of footage = 4280 GB, or 4.2-4.3 TB
3. 4.3TB eSATA array \* 2 (you want redundant copies) = \$575
4. Controller/array \* 2 boxes + \$300/drive \* 10 drives = \$4150

You'll also want drives for editing your rough cut and/or shuttle drives as well

## RENTAL

Here's where it gets sketchy. Prices from folks I've talked to varied widely. You'll notice that very few prices are available online. There are two reasons for this. Since the market is in flux, it's best not to lock in a fixed price -- The camera is designed as an *a la carte* system, so your final rental price depends on what you get with it. As a package, here's what I would budget for:

1. Red body
2. Red EVF
3. Red LCD
4. Red Powerpack (don't know how many batteries you get)
5. Red production pack (includes rails, handheld grips)
6. (1) or (2) RedDrives (320Gig) - no downtime
7. Set of 35mm prime lenses
8. The normal camera gear from here: sticks, mattebox, etc.

Some also say you should rent RedCards (8 Gigs) but I'm not sure that's necessary, unless you're creating scene files on camera and storing them to the cards

Most places I talked to wouldn't rent the camera without one of their guys along for the shoot, and that person probably ain't cheap. Based on Phantom prices, here's what I came up with:

1. \$2K/day for package with possibility of 2-3 day rental/week for 4-week shoot
2. \$500/day for guy

Since demand is higher than supply now, some rental companies didn't want to consider renting to an indie company right away; they want to make money on commercials.

## **POST**

During shooting, there is a on-camera option to create QuickTime proxy movies after each take. I wasn't able to find out how long this takes. In all likelihood, you'll be doing this when you load your footage onto your permanent storage using RedAlert or RedCine. Either way, you'll do your picture edit on some form of lower-rez QuickTime file.

Then you'll go into an online suite and conform your material, just as you would in a "normal" DI, except you don't have to scan in and dustbust reels of negative (significant savings). Your post costs here will be roughly equivalent to a DI from HD, depending on what format you want to end up on and what resolution your DI is.

(If you've shot 4K, you'll probably want to do your DI at 4K for 35mm, 2K for HDCAM, HD-SR res for standard-def delivery, etc.). Each house does its DI a little differently, but it boils down to the same general process: scan/load, conform, dissolves/opticals, title, correct, output, submaster, archive.

Note that you can do some "sweat equity" work if you transcode your footage to something your DI suite understands BEFORE walking in there. You can, theoretically, use RedCine to transcode your footage to TIFF or TARGA files, for example. Don't assume your post house's software understands RAW files! (I got burned in a Quantel suite because it couldn't understand HDV. I had to transfer my material to HDCAM and transcode some of it to uncompressed HD. A very expensive, time-consuming problem). Also, don't assume your post house's people know everything about your format - check it out yourself, AND budget for some tests.

Keep in mind that the plasticity of Red's format means you can do a lot of tweaking in post. However, it doesn't mean that this tweaking is free! So you shouldn't think that you could save ALL your creative "look" decisions until the last stage. At the very least, it'll cost you more money (online editor/room time isn't cheap). On the other hand, being able to scan through the footage with RedCine means that you can make some judgments before you get to the online.

## **NET RESULT**

I'm predicting that you'll see RED eat up approximately as much of your budget as a super 16mm shoot, one way or another. I'm not going to get into a debate on the merits of HD/4K vs. film.

I think the Red is a great tool and will replace 35mm on a lot of shoots (commercials come to mind immediately). You get the flexibility of film without the hassles.

For indie filmmakers with \$500K - \$1M budgets, I say look at what the Red rentals will do to older HD technology (Sony F900/F950 or Panasonic HDX900/Varicam/HPX500) prices. These days, almost any camera you pick up will deliver a terrific image; as always, it's up to the skill of the people handling the gear. My personal conclusion is that if I have to choose, I'd rather get a superior DP and camera crew that cost a little more and give them a not-so-top-of-the-line camera.

If you have \$1M - \$2M, then the RED can up your production value considerably over existing HD cameras while enabling you to shoot a lot more coverage than 35mm. You avoid film's "issues" but retain many of its advantages.

The situation is changing very rapidly (more Reds are available every day), and you may find rental rates dropping from my quotes. The best advice is to go to the rental houses nearest you for direct quotes (most didn't even want to give me quotes unless I had an actual project in front of me).

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