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ScreenPlay Documents the War in Afghanistan for CBS

ScreenPlay Operates Flawlessly Under Fire

By Aleta Walther

For two-and-a-half months, video photographer and editor Ron Whitting hunkered down in a dusty bunker to document the war in Afghanistan for CBS News. Whitting used his ScreenPlay nonlinear video editor almost daily, creating more than 23 hours of B-roll for reporters and network feeds for special reports.

“There was no question I would take my ScreenPlay with me to Afghanistan,” said Whitting, a freelance photographer and editor who has been working with CBS for more than 20 years.”
“I knew I would need a reliable editor for creating simple and slick footage quickly. It took 10 minutes to setup the ScreenPlay, and in another two minutes I was editing. Nothing fancy, just simple cuts, fades and dissolves.”

Manufactured by Applied Magic of Carlsbad, Calif., ScreenPlay is a turnkey, PC-free, nonlinear, video editing appliance – appliance meaning it does one thing and only one thing well, edit video. ScreenPlay offers a 60GB hard drive for about 4 hours of broadcast (DV) quality video, real-time functionality, drag-and-drop simplicity, and array of transitions, special effects, color effects and more for \$3,995 (MSRP).

Whitting’s news team consisted of seven freelance broadcast professionals who took turns shooting and editing footage during their tour of duty in Afghanistan. The CBS team was based out of Camp Rhino, a Marine outpost south of Kandahar. Much of their time, however, was spent holed up in a 12-foot by 15-foot bombproof bunker burrowed in the ground just outside of the Northern Afghan City of Kabul. The bunker was so close to the front line that bullets whizzed over head. Heavy artillery blasts rattled the Earth. Sadly, one foreign photographer was killed just 100-150 feet from where Whitting stood shooting with a Panasonic F565 with a DVC Pro Recorder.

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“The conditions were pretty extreme,” Whitting recalled. “Everywhere we went we had an Army escort. It was cold, 20s and 30s, blowing dust and dirt, creepy crawling things everywhere. It was nasty! We did have generators in the bunker that powered some heaters and the editing equipment.”

Despite the extreme conditions and continual use, Whitting said he edited on the ScreenPlay daily and it “performed flawlessly.” Although he could not say the same for the Avid that shared the bunker editing bay with the ScreenPlay, two 8” Sony monitors and a Mackie audio board.

“There were several occasions where the Avid failed,” said Whitting, who has extensive experience using a variety of editing tools. “It was just too slow, took too long to render. While the other editors struggled with the Avid, I edited away on my ScreenPlay. We eventually packed up the Avid and did all of our editing on the ScreenPlay.”

Afghanistan was not the first time Whitting has endured extreme working conditions. Working with CBS, he covered the 1994 Northridge, Calif., and 1989 San Francisco, Calif. earthquakes; Hurricane Andrew (1992); the 1994 bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City and other catastrophic events.

“I wish I would have had a ScreenPlay back then,” said Whitting. “It would have made my life a lot easier and I could have done a lot more work.”

When not working for CBS, Whitting manages his own production company, A.F. Productions of Tyler, Texas. A.F. Productions produces a variety of programming, including documentaries, commercials, music videos and corporate marketing materials. The company also owns three satellite trucks and provides shooting, editing and up-link services for a variety of clients and major networks, including the NFL, NJCAA, NCAA, Dallas Cowboys, NBC, ABC, Fox Sports, BBC and PBS. The company also produces record albums.

“I have used about every kind of editor out there, but the ScreenPlay is really the only editing tool I use these days,” he said. “I don’t like using the other editing systems as most are overpriced and overrated. My ScreenPlay is fast, reliable and offers the features I use the most.”

About Applied Magic

Applied Magic, Inc. is a San Diego area-based company specializing in the development, licensing and marketing of powerful and intuitive solutions for professional video editors, event videographers, corporate video producers and consumers. The company manufactures and markets the non-linear video production appliance, ScreenPlay™, and related software and hardware accessory products.

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