

21 Sep Strategies in delivering your film

Posted at 15:19h in News by Sophie Bourdon



Sharing stories from DPC II 2017: Story 1

Strategies in delivering your film by Dutch post-production supervisor Miga Bär and French sales agent Sylvain Lagrillere (servicing dept, Memento Films International)

Sylvain started off by stressing how he is the bad cop of international sales, the guy who chases producers with a list of requirements for delivery. That said, his goal at DPC II was to pass on tips in order that mistakes can be avoided and to enable productions to save money when it comes to this part of their business.

Quite simply, the session was (firstly) divided into “who, what and how”.

What kind of people will be knocking at your door demanding deliverables? What will they be demanding exactly? And as regards how, what are the variables that everybody should always be aware of? Then Sylvain would assess the **“why, the when and the where”** from a sales perspective before Miga and Silvain together offered up some tips to avoid future strife, with examples thrown in for illustration.

Kicking off, we saw the end credit sequence from Martin Koolhoven’s *Brimstone* which indicated the vast number of companies and institutions demanding deliverables from Filmmore. There were more than 140 deliverable items that needed to be arranged, to producers, co-producers, funds and national archives, sales and distributors, broadcasters, national tax incentives and film financing companies.

What will these companies be demanding? DCDMs, DCPs (encrypted and unencrypted and DKDM), Quicktimes both in broadcast quality (in different frame rates) and reference files, MXF files, Tapes (HD-Cam SR and Digi Beta, BluRay and DVD screeners (ones for fests and press) plus trailers, teasers, EPKs and bonus material. Then the whole audio part, mixes to be used in every environment, the intermediary files (M&E: music and effects, and the potentially huge D,M&E: dialogue music and effects), subtitle documents in all available languages, promo materials and all legal documentation (always in English).

It has the potential to be a “big, bad jungle” so make sure that you have made the time to read the contract through and that you know what you will need to ultimately deliver, advised Miga.

Tips and things to think about ahead of time on deliverables that will be requested:

1. Textless elements, for international markets to insert their own graphics and texts.
2. Separate your idents from your film to allow for local credit reels. (The only problem you will get will be from an angry soundman whose sound work will be interrupted, said Miga)
3. Know your aspect ratios, resolutions and colour spaces in the HDR-ready phase where there are multiple standards and multiple semi-standards. So if you have to deliver for HDR, then be prepared as there will be a lot of questions from a lot of different people. There are several standards you can deliver in, such as 2:1 Univision aspect ratio (eg House of Cards), a beautiful aspect ratio but bear in mind that if you want to go to theatre in 2 by 1 then you will end up with a screen with black bars on all side, which makes it a nice creative decision for broadcast, but not for cinema.
4. Versions for visual and hearing-impaired audiences, both audio description (for visually impaired) and subtitles (for audio impaired). Some funds, such as Ireland and The Netherlands demand audio description (with funding available in the latter). This is an important issue within co-productions when a minority partner all of a sudden puts one of these demands on their deliverables list, and it can easily cost up to €10,000 if you want to do it properly. And cinema is 24 fps to TV’s 25 fps so you will need different versions as well.

The Sales View: SYLVAIN

Sylvain gave an example of the demand for deliverables prior to a festival world premiere.

The first step is to create the subtitles in the language from where the screening takes place. If Cannes this will be French and English, both on screen and off screen. The first item demanded will be a DCP Master, either 4K (preferable) or 2K. Plus 4K is backwards compatible. And he asks for BluRay for back-up, as well as digital screeners.

When there is a first all-rights sale, the distributor will ask for all the materials that are available, the DCP, a trailer (plus access to the domestic trailer), the home video materials, audio elements and legal & marketing delivery. (“And these are always sent last minute, of course,” Sylvain complained.)

For restricted sales like TV, home video and airlines, the demands for deliverables can be more complicated. The likes of HBO or AMC or airlines will ask for 1:78 ratio which can be quite expensive, and it is an expense that you must anticipate. If your film is in scope or in flat, your lab will have to resize it, which also can be expensive. Plus all bonus material will be demanded, including interviews and making-ofs etc. The distributors are very happy to work with these elements for their home video release, and they boost home sales.

Deliveries to Sales Agents: When?

1. For World premiere
 2. For Domestic and Worldwide release (which comes after domestic)
 3. Complete delivery for last items such as legal and music rights, the stuff that takes a long time to sort out, always in English
- Miga told a story about a colleague whose film had cleared music rights just for Holland, but a sale to Korea was scuppered by the fact that the music rights there would exceed the sale price, as well as potential profits. So, it is very important to plan for that. But specific E&O (errors and omissions) insurance can be purchased to protect against such eventualities, advised Martin. But it is necessary to bear in mind everything for which rights apply. If things like this aren’t anticipated it can get very expensive and very messy. If it is sorted out in advance, then rights holders don’t have you over a barrel at the business end of the deal.

Gary Beach pointed out how, every now and then, an unauthorised product or logo can appear in the shot, for which rights would be retrospectively chargeable. At which point he can remove these in VFX.

NEW!! Deliveries to new platforms, Netflix and Amazon

When these companies conclude worldwide sales deals, deliverables deadlines are invariably really tight. Sylvain stressed how he had to make 20 subtitled versions of a film in one month. “So as soon as a deal is concluded you must be ready to deliver in one or two months, which is tight,” he advised. They check everything and demand a million different items.

At this point Sylvain showed us a mind-bogglingly 9-page general delivery schedule (see linked??) that ran to nine pages, and then another for a Netflix deal.

Not to be outdone, Miga did likewise, showing a full list of all the technical aspects relating to contractual deliverables requirements, including DSM ungraded, regular DSM, DCDMs, DCPs etc. He needs to know which Reel Zero will be on top, the frame rates, the aspect ratios, the textless elements. Will there be subtitles, do they need to be burned in? And much much more. It is all about boiling down the demands of sales contract(s) into a flawlessly correct delivery.

Miga would look to receive these details from his contact at the sales company as early as possible, with as much communication as is necessary to make sure all parties will be able to action everything correctly. It is not rocket science, he underlined. It is part of the job, but it is a tiresome process. (But remember, a lot of stuff on the lists is negotiable, and these negotiations can ultimately save a lot of money.)

What are the minimum requirements in terms of file delivery, the pair were asked. The very strict minimum, Sylvain answered, is one subtitled pro-res, one English sub-titled pro-res, one unsubtitled DCP, one English subtitled DCP, print master, M&E, DM&E, a trailer, a poster... “We can make sales for 10 or 15 years, so we have to be able to deliver a new deal at the last minute, otherwise it is a deal breaker,” he added.

“There are so many things that can change in the variables,” clipped in Miga. “I firmly believe that on a project where there are more than six or seven parties that you need to deliver to, that a post-production supervisor can earn his or her own fee completely on the reduction on the delivery list. It is a wise investment.”

TIPS AND TRICKS

Common subjects to discuss when negotiating a delivery schedule:

1. Pan and scan versions
 2. Deliver files as opposed to tapes
 3. Deliver files as opposed to optical media
 4. QC reports – these can cost a lot and many are produced at €3000 per file. Determine if they are really necessary, especially if you believe your original QC report to be adequate.
 5. Audio-mapping
 6. Textless elements at tail or separate
- Also: get your post-supervisor, lab and sales agent involved at the earliest stage. Think about worldwide clearances before you shoot/edit. Remember, everything is more expensive when ordered after the principal delivery phase (such as Foley work). Anticipate extremely tight deadlines. The better your material, the better it will be sold by your sales agent.

ARCHIVE

The pair offered a perspective on the topic of Archive, underlining that there are no standards right now (commented Miga). Five years ago (maybe even three) your archive would be either your negative print or HD-Cam SR tape (for HD delivery) or Digital Betacam (for SR delivery). That worked well, although these are legacy formats that are limited in terms of their storage functionality.

Right now, funds and archives demand DCDMs as they open up the option to create another language option in the future. A flexible solution, but still one made for the cinema screen, so not completely future proof. (Sometimes 35mm print is still demanded)

For producer’s own storage, you can store on DCDM, a good solution with 16-Bit TIFF sequence in the P3 XYZ colour space which is (at least now) the highest standard for cinema, and either 2K or 4K.

Miga’s suggested methods (and none of these is official standard:

DSM final graded and display referred (connected to standard screen or Dolby Vision): 12-Bit DPX sequence in either PS (when for cinema) or Rec709 (for TV) in 2k/4K or HD/UHD.

DSM final graded and scene referred (not attached to screen, bendable): 16-Bit EXR sequence in ACES or Camera LOG in 2K or 4K or Source resolution.

DSM non-graded (a demand from Netflix and Amazon, that comprises a consolidation of the sources that ended up in the film with the VFX already in the image with all image manipulations pre-attached): Sources files or 16-Bit EXR sequence in Camera LOG in Source resolution.

If there is a future screen that uses radically different technology, then a new version of a film may be re-created from these last two methods.