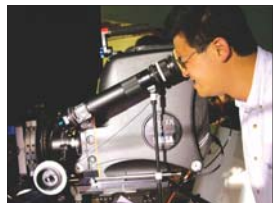


## GEAR

## Shooting the Future: Dalsa's Origin Gets its First Outing

By Scott Lehane

Since Dalsa first introduced its Origin 4K uncompressed digital camera earlier this year, the real question has been, who's going to step forward to be the first to take it out in a real production environment and put it through its paces? And it's really no small step. Few producers want to risk



Postcards from the Future director Alan Chan

their production budgets on an experiment. And Dalsa poses some unique challenges. Data rates increase exponentially as

you increase resolution, and uncompressed 4K (in the production world at least), represents a whole new plateau.

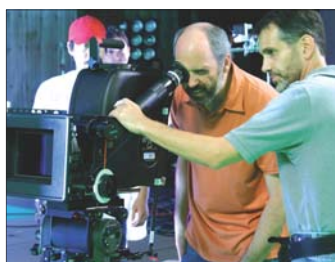
So when *Postcards From the Future* director Alan Chan first approached cinematographer Eric Adkins to pick his brain about disk-based recording systems, "The original plan was to shoot on HD, but I didn't want to deal with tape. But Eric turned around and said, 'So... You want to go to disk, huh? Well, how about 4K?'"

Adkins, who recently served as DP on *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow*, admits, "I've been on a recent rampage to test out new digital capturing devices. It was a shorter project, but it's better to test it out on a shorter project before it gets out on a feature."

He explained why the 34-minute piece was really the ideal project to test the Origin: it was a visual effects-heavy piece, and primarily a greenscreen shoot; it was short enough to make the data manageable, and above all, they wanted to be able to film out to

IMAX in the end for distribution to science centers and museums.

Inspired by President Bush's "Vision for Space Exploration"—an ambitious, long-term plan to build a



Cinematographer Eric Adkins of *Postcards from the Future*

base on the Moon and send a manned mission to Mars—Chan explained that the film is designed "as a tool to help the public visualize the possible future we can build, and to recruit their support for the Initiative."

The film tells the story of an electrical engineer sent to the new lunar colony to work on the power grid, told through a series of video

postcards sent back to Earth. The obvious innuendo is that the cutting-edge camera of today (the Origin), will be the desktop videoconferencing camera of some distant future, if you take Moore's law to the nth degree.

But for today, Chan admits, "We're still a few years ahead of the curve. But think back a few years ago, when 4 or 5 Gb of hard drive space was more than enough—more than you would ever need."

The three-day shoot generated about 3.2 Tb of data for less than two hours of raw footage. But with his background as a technical director at Sony Pictures Imageworks, with effects credits on films like *The*

*Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, *Polar Express* and *Titanic*, dealing with Dalsa's hefty data rate didn't seem quite as daunting for Chan.

In fact, Adkins explained that that was another key reason he recommended the Origin for the project: he knew Chan could handle the data. "Alan's pretty savvy and he can throw files around pretty easily."

Adkins reported that, "Origin is very friendly on the floor. We didn't run into any drop frames. Everything went very smoothly. So I think it's a capable camera for the right project."

"My feeling is that when you shoot SD or HD, you're always trying to tweak it to make it look so much better than it is," said Adkins. "The comfort with the Dalsa Origin was that I felt like I no longer had to worry about those tweaks to make the image look better. I got to trust what I was seeing, and I found myself studying the monitor less and trusting my eye more, like I would with a film camera. Because of its dynamic range you can really trust your eye again."

At press time, the film was in the final stages of editing on Adobe Premiere Pro, using 1K proxies. At the end, the 4K conform will be done at Dalsa's Digital Cinema Center in Woodland Hills, California.

## The DIT: New Kid on the Block

By Scott Lehane

With each new generation of digital cinematography cameras, the technology gets more and more sophisticated and increasingly complex, and these days even cinematographers can find themselves lost in the cameras' complicated menu systems.

The cameras themselves perform mathematical gymnastics in real time to give you an output that's useable. But at its heart, it's still a computer, and if it's going to be useful as a production tool, you need someone around on set who knows how the computer side of the camera works.


So it was really the launch of Sony's 24P CineAlta camera in 2000 that gave rise to the role of the digital imaging technician (DIT)—a new position on the film crew, and one that's evolving rapidly. Today, a DIT would be considered pretty much indispensable on any shoot using anything from a CineAlta up to some of the newer electronic cinematography cameras like Thomson's Viper, Arri's D-20, Panavision's Genesis, or Dalsa's Origin.


"The role of the DIT has gone farther than simply a representative from the rental house to facilitate the use of the equipment," said Joshua Gollish, who is serving as the DIT on *Everybody Hates Chris*, a show currently being shot at Paramount with the Viper for UPN. "There's a big need for guys like me right now."

Indeed, especially with the newer cameras, finding someone with enough knowledge about the camera to troubleshoot problems as they arise can be a challenge. And although it's a role that can be vital to keeping production on track, Gollish reported that it's often poorly understood.

"Often producers and directors come up to me and say, 'what do you do? What's your job?' That's


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## New Gear From Manfrotto

Manfrotto recently introduced three new products—a new Pro Fluid Video Head, a new set of Zoom Remote Controls, and a tripod kit for new HDV cameras.

The 526 Pro Fluid Head addresses the heavy-duty, high-end ENG and EFP video market, supporting up to 35.3 pounds. It features Manfrotto's precise fluid drag system, as well as a no-drag setting for snap-pans and tilts. It is also available with the 350MVB tripod in a complete video kit.

The 524 range of Zoom Remote Controls includes the 524AX for Angenieux, the 524CN for Canon and the

524FN for Fujinon lenses. The 524 remote control features a professional

thumb zoom wheel for fine adjustment and smooth zooming.

The stepless zoom control speed dial gives the user the ability to pre-select a zoom speed or change the zoom speed mid-shot.

The company also introduced the 503,351MVB2K Pro Video Aluminum Kit—a tripod kit that includes the 503 Pro Fluid Head, designed for the new HDV cameras. The kit is designed to fold down to a small, convenient size and comes with padded bag.



Manfrotto's 524CN