

## GigaPix Studios/ *Captain Abu Raed*

### Breaking new ground

Post-production veteran discovers the power of Adobe® Creative Suite® 3 Production Premium featuring Adobe Premiere® Pro CS3 software while finishing award-winning film



The film *Captain Abu Raed* is uncommon in more ways than one. Directed by Amin Matalqa and produced by GigaPix Studios and Paper and Pen, it is the first feature film to come out of Jordan in 50 years. It also won The Sundance 2008 World Cinema Audience Award: Dramatic. But perhaps what is least visible but most impressive about the film is the efficient post-production workflow used to finish it, with Adobe Creative Suite 3 Production Premium, including Adobe Premiere Pro CS3 software, at the center of the finishing process.

“There were several challenges associated with producing this film—damaged editing equipment, extreme heat, unheard of deadlines, and too many other issues to mention—but finishing the film using Adobe Premiere Pro was definitely not one of them,” says GRAFF Network Services Technical Director and Post-production Supervisor Clark Graff, who was contracted by GigaPix. “I have been using Avid systems for more than 10 years and had not tried Adobe Premiere Pro for a very long time. I was absolutely stunned by how well Adobe Premiere Pro works.”



Abu Raed (Nadim Sawalha) & the neighborhood kids.

## CAPTAIN ABU RAED

To complete post-production on the film, Graff designed a tapeless workflow using a custom-built hardware and software configuration that includes Adobe Premiere Pro CS3.



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**Clark Graff,**  
technical director and  
post-production supervisor,  
GRAFF Network Services

### Post-production twists and turns

*Captain Abu Raed* tells the story of an aging airport janitor who is mistaken for an airline pilot by a group of poor neighborhood children and whose fantastical stories offer hope for a sad, sometimes unchangeable, reality. Happy for the company and attention, the janitor takes the children to colorful places around the world through his fictional stories and inspires them to believe in their own ambitions.

The film was shot on new Arriflex D20 digital cameras. Using the AJA Xena 2Ke, footage was captured Dual-Link 4:4:4 and acquired directly to disk. Because the Xena card provided immediate DPX file writing, and the Arriflex cameras provided exceptional picture quality, everyone on the crew anticipated a significant time-saving, post-production process. Graff, who worked on *The Matrix*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *I Robot*, had his hands full getting the film and sound elements ready for digital post-production.

“We provided all the picture and sound capturing and post-production services for the film and supervised the sound mix, color correction, and final render to output to 35mm film. But the post production turned out as it usually does, complicated,” says Graff. “Because we shot the film on new Arri cameras, we had to factor in some new methodologies. Some were solved by writing a proprietary file management software we call ‘Footage Safe’ and others with hardware configurations.”



Graff and his team had to overcome numerous logistical and technical hurdles, but Adobe Premiere Pro CS3 wasn't one of them. According to Graff, Premiere Pro CS3 worked flawlessly.



To add to the challenge, the filmmakers decided to enter the Dubai and Sundance film festivals. This meant that a preliminary edit would need to be delivered within six weeks of returning to the U.S. "Editor Laith Al-Majali and Director Amin Matalqa didn't sleep much for the first two months. The 35mm print needed to be completed for Sundance delivery at the end of December 2007, so post-production all the way to output to 35mm film prints had to happen within five months of completing principal photography," recalls Graff. "We met all the goals, but we lost a lot of sleep."

#### **No tape, no problem**

To outpace the harrowing deadline and maintain pristine quality, Graff developed a tapeless workflow for the project. He and his team recorded from the two Arriflex D-20s directly to digital disk recorders using AJA's XENA 2Ke while filming on location. Designed and built by Graff, each of the three proprietary digital disk recorders featured eight useable terabytes of storage and XENA video capture and playback cards, which facilitated an end-to-end, all digital, file-based workflow through production and post.

Majali, supported by a team headed by Graff, cut the film on two Avid Media Composer systems and conformed directly on custom-built digital disk recorders using Adobe Premiere Pro software. This unusual setup was made possible by AJA's plug-ins, which enable Digital Moving-Picture Exchange (DPX) files to be captured, imported, and conformed in Adobe Premiere Pro. Graff's team converted the original timeline into CMX3600 format, opened it in Adobe Premiere Pro, and turned one of the disc recorders into an editing machine. Graff then redigitized and finished the entire uncompressed film using Adobe Premiere Pro. According to Graff, *Command-K* in Adobe Premiere Pro became his new best friend.

"It sounds like a small feature, but it saves time," says Graff. "Throughout the whole post-production process, I said 'Hmmm' about a million times, because I was so impressed at how smoothly everything went when we started the conform using Adobe Premiere Pro CS3."

#### **Company**

##### **GigaPix Studios**

Chatsworth, California  
[www.gigapixstudios.com](http://www.gigapixstudios.com)

##### **GRAFF Network Services**

Marina del Rey, California  
[www.graff.tv](http://www.graff.tv)

[www.captainaburaed.com](http://www.captainaburaed.com)

#### **Challenges**

- Complete production and output to 35mm film prints within four months
- Conform a film shot on new Arriflex cameras
- Build custom software and hardware configurations to finish the film
- Set up post-production process to match all the film and sound elements
- Maintain pristine quality

#### **Solution**

- Develop a tapeless workflow using a custom-built hardware and software configuration
- Take advantage of Adobe Creative Suite 3 Production Premium and Adobe Premiere Pro CS3 for conforming as well as producing titles and sound
- Use Adobe Encore CS3 to create DVDs for interim reviews

#### **Benefits**

- Won The Sundance 2008 World Cinema Audience Award: Dramatic
- Produced film of exceptional quality
- Met extreme deadlines for entry into film festivals
- Saved time with Adobe Premiere Pro CS3 features like *Command-K*
- Streamlined post-production with integration among Adobe applications
- Worked smoothly with data from high-end audio tools
- Readily matched film and sound elements

#### **Toolkit**

- Adobe Creative Suite 3 Production Premium. Components used include:
  - Adobe Encore CS3
  - Adobe Photoshop CS3 Extended
  - Adobe Premiere Pro CS3
- Custom-built digital disk recorders
- AJA XENA 2Ke video playback and capture cards
- Arriflex D-20 cameras
- AJA plug-ins for Adobe Premiere Pro CS3
- Digidesign Pro Tools
- Steinberg Cubase

Graff cites integration among all of the applications in Adobe Creative Suite 3 Production Premium as one of the main reasons for his team's outstanding productivity on the project.



*"I just can't say enough good things about Adobe Creative Suite 3 Production Premium and Adobe Premiere Pro CS3."*

**Clark Graff,**  
technical director and  
post-production supervisor,  
GRAFF Network Services

#### **Sound and titles made easy**

Graff and his team also used Adobe Premiere Pro CS3 to output reels for the sound mix, generate all of the sound/picture reference, and complete the layback in 5.1 Dolby and Stereo. Throughout the audio-editing process, the team copied VST plugin parameters from other applications, including Steinberg Nuendo and Digidesign Pro Tools, directly into Adobe Premiere Pro. "Pretty much all of us are musicians and we were surprised and pleased by the strong VST support in Adobe Premiere Pro and its ability to work smoothly with other audio tools," says Graff.

The film's titles were created in Adobe Photoshop® CS3 Extended and imported directly into Adobe Premiere Pro CS3 for assembly—without any issues with translating

file formats. "We'll be using more components of Adobe Creative Suite 3 Production Premium in the future because of the slick integration among all the tools," says Graff.

During post-production, the team used Adobe Encore® CS3 to quickly generate DVDs so that Matalqa could review specific cuts. Graff notes that, while they did not dive deeply into the capabilities of Encore CS3, the team appreciated the many hours saved by the ability to add chapter markers right within the Adobe Premiere Pro timeline instead of having to add chapter markers later within Encore.

#### **More to come**

Overall, Graff and his team are so impressed with the capabilities of Adobe Creative Suite 3 Production Premium and the efficiency of Adobe Premiere Pro CS3 that they are now using the software suite on a new documentary project and plan to make it a standard part of their workflow. Concludes Graff, "I just can't say enough good things about Adobe Creative Suite 3 Production Premium and Adobe Premiere Pro CS3."



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