



Sharlto Copley On his own terms

Sharlto Copley revisits his *District 9* character, Wikus Van De Merwe



Sharlto Copley

Los Angeles, California

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Sharlto Copley shapes his own creative destiny using Adobe® Premiere® Pro CS5 software

Sharlto Copley is just as comfortable in front of the camera as he is behind it. He is perhaps best known for appearing as if from nowhere and landing a starring role as the sinister Wikus Van De Merwe in the 2009 Oscar-nominated movie *District 9*, directed by Neill Blomkamp. He is playing Captain "Howling Mad" Murdock in *The A-Team*, slated for release in June 2010. He is also a director, writer, producer, and visual effects producer with many films and television programs to his credit. In short, when it comes to filmmaking, Sharlto Copley does it all. From the very beginning of his career, Adobe Premiere Pro software has been his choice for non-linear editing.

"I've always been a big fan of Adobe Premiere Pro," says Copley. "It was the first software to break the mold and deliver timeline-based editing. Adobe Premiere Pro transformed the industry and outclassed old-style systems that force you to think about A and B roll and toggle between windows. It was a different school of thought—one that supports the fluid way today's new filmmaking breed thinks."

“Adobe Premiere Pro CS5 is so incredibly stable—and with native 64-bit support, I found myself sitting there saying ‘Wow’ at its amazing performance.”

Sharlto Copley
Actor and filmmaker

Challenge

- Gain more creative control in filmmaking
- Produce high-quality films on small budgets
- Support truly independent filmmaking process involving small teams
- Land top acting roles
- Create clips for auditions quickly

Solution

- Use Adobe Premiere Pro CS5 to edit together character tests
- Take advantage of 64-bit support for lightning-fast performance
- Realize unique creative visions with small teams of filmmakers

Benefits

- Landed starring roles in films like *District 9* and *The A-Team*
- Realized his own unique creative visions
- Edited short film for South African Music Awards in two days
- Worked with small teams to preserve and realize unique creative expression

Toolkit

Adobe Premiere Pro CS5

An Adobe Premiere Pro veteran

Copley has used Adobe Premiere Pro for years, but he is more devoted and enthusiastic than ever now that he is using Adobe Premiere Pro CS5. He wielded the newest version of the software to edit a short film starring himself as Wikus Van De Merwe and fellow Afrikaner and mega-star Charlize Theron. The concept for the film evolved when Copley was asked to present an award at the South African Music Awards. He had been traveling so much that he felt he couldn't endure another 30-hour flight.

"I offered to create a short film instead of attending the ceremony in person and enlisted Charlize, whom I had met at the Oscars," he says. "The concept for the film is that I—in character as Wikus Van De Merwe—try to enlist Charlize to present with me at the ceremony. She loved the idea."

Two days to cut a short film

The trouble was Copley didn't have funding for the project and he only had about two days to edit the film—but obstacles like these have never stopped him before. He shot the project using a Panasonic P2 HD camera and edited it using Adobe Premiere Pro CS5 software. With his own creative genius and input from friends like Blomkamp, Copley soon had a hilarious short film that premiered to rave reviews at the music awards. The film was seen by eight million television viewers, and has since been posted to sites like *funnyordie.com*, where it has received hundreds of thousands of views.

"I had two days to turn two hours of footage into a four- to five-minute film," says Copley. "It was literally game over for the project if I couldn't edit quickly and avoid glitches and setbacks. Adobe Premiere Pro CS5 is so incredibly stable—and with native 64-bit support, I found myself sitting there saying 'Wow' at its amazing performance. With Adobe Premiere Pro CS5, Adobe has made a quantum leap that I believe will have more filmmakers adopting the software."

Auditions on his own terms

Adobe Premiere Pro has also shaped Copley's career in front of the camera. He began acting on his own in front of a camera when he was 12 years old, using VHS tapes and two VCRs to make movies. Today, his comfort in front of the camera has led to starring roles. He shoots character tests of himself, edits the best parts together using Adobe Premiere Pro, and sends them to directors. With this approach, he has landed parts in movies like *The A-Team*.

Rising star Sharlto Copley not only uses Adobe Premiere Pro CS5 to edit his films, but also applies the software to cut character tests of himself that have helped him obtain starring roles in films.



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"I've even shot character tests of myself in a hotel room and edited them on a plane in Adobe Premiere Pro," he says. "A lot of actors put themselves on tape, but if the tape is boring, it actually hurts their cause. I've been working in Adobe Premiere Pro for a long time so it often takes me only a few hours to create five or six entertaining short pieces. Auditions are like the lottery with almost everything left to chance—but by using Adobe Premiere Pro CS5 to edit character tests, I am more in control of my own destiny."

Truly independent filmmaking

For Copley, tools like Adobe Premiere Pro CS5 provide the foundation for a new way of making films that requires far less money and delivers more creative control. Traditionally, he says, directors surround themselves with the best writers, visual effects, sound, and other professionals and then take their team's advice. While this approach works, it is more expensive, more reliant on whoever holds the purse strings, and results in a film that is the product of many minds. According to Copley, the creative direction can become blurred with so many people involved. He aims to create more consistent work, and to drive the project based on his own creative vision.

"Tools like Adobe Premiere Pro give filmmakers the opportunity to achieve a higher level of uniqueness and consistency," says Copley. "Today, filmmakers can do everything on the desktop, from editing and color to sound, to maintain true to their expression. It is literally possible to make a short film with five people, a computer, and Adobe Premiere Pro. It used to be that you could raise all the money you needed, but the film was not going to be what you want. Now, you can create exactly the film you want, without a lot of money."

Copley adds that today's next-generation filmmakers—those less reliant on big studios and big budgets—tend to be generalists who are well versed in all areas of filmmaking, so everyone can provide input yet keep to one cohesive creative path. "I like to work with a small group of very talented individuals. None of us are intimidated by graphics, color, VFX, sound, or any other part of filmmaking. It really ups the game and results in a more unique, stronger product when there are just a few people involved," says Copley.

He notes that Adobe Premiere Pro CS5 helps during the collaboration process when working with a small team. "Rendering speed is near real-time in Adobe Premiere Pro CS5, so someone can literally be looking over my shoulder as I'm working and provide instant feedback," he says.

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but always and inevitably, it is nurtured and honed
in Adobe Premiere Pro CS5."*

Sharlto Copley
Actor and filmmaker

Creativity, forged in unique cauldron

Because Copley is from South Africa, a country with one of the world's most complicated histories, he has seen violence and strife, and he has been alternately ashamed and proud of his country. What emanates in his creative expression is a kind of rare and raw honesty and complexity, yet also a brand of unique and surprising satirical humor.

"Whether I'm making a film or getting into character for a part, I have a lot to draw from in being South African," says Copley. "My roots are where the creative expression is born, but always and inevitably, it is nurtured and honed in Adobe Premiere Pro CS5."

For more information

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