

I-Movix Sprintcam

The next revolution in Slow-Motion ? By Steve Cotterill.

Many of you will have worked in the industry for several years, as I have - over 30 years now in my case! - and will have witnessed many a "revolution" in the equipment we use to do our jobs in the world of Outside Broadcasts, particularly in the slow-motion field. Few will have used the very early Ampex HS100 optical disc system, the majority will have perhaps performed their first slow-motion replay on a "C-Format" one inch videotape machine, manufactured by either Ampex or Sony, using the SMC or DTR 2000 controllers respectively. In my opinion, the first minor revolution in slo-mo technology, certainly here in the UK, was the Ash Vale SM1 controller - this offered the operator a very simple, reliable and user friendly control surface for any RS422 controlled tape deck - and actually saved many an operators reputation by stopping before the end of recording!

The next widely used format was Sony Beta SP, although some were tempted by the slightly higher specification M2 by Panasonic, still mainly controlled by Ash Vale SM1 controllers or the later SM2 dual decks version, for the very brave, clever or perhaps foolish? Although, the SM2 did have a rather useful timecode search facility. Even more fun was had by those who worked for companies who would not buy controllers and thus had to perform slo-mo's by using the front panel controls on the tape deck - yes, I have been there! To be fair one must also mention the later Sony DMC 3000 controller, a very nice looking piece of kit, twice the price (and as complicated to operate!) as the Ash Vale product, so not widely used - but there were those who liked the challenge!

The first high speed slow motion system was devised by Sony, called "super-motion" and recorded at 75fps using the Sony 9000 camera and an associated SP style tape deck running at three times normal speed - this certainly produced a more "detailed" replay and was

much love by the TV sports production teams and is still widely used today albeit with later generation cameras. From memory the first trials for this product were performed at the Albertville Winter Olympics. Thompson did, for some strange reason bring out a 50fps camera at some point, but they too now provide a LDK triple-motion variant, still in regular use.

Am I waffling? I apologise, but now we get to a very historical moment in my career and I think in the face of Sports TV as we know it. This story started with four Belgian university students who had a dream of producing a product for use in sport, with the ability to provide an instant replay i.e. mark a cue point and upon the press of a button have a replay ready for "air", oh, and by the way, when standing by to transmit said replay, the system carried on recording - never again would you hear that dreaded phrase "what do you mean you were not recording?!"

I was introduced to this idea by a well known "live" sports Director, Steve Docherty, who thought it might be a good plan for me to have a look at this product - this was just after I had left Independent TV and was on the road as a freelance editor / slo-mo operator, mainly working for the new boys on the block - satellite TV. (I remember thinking "it will never take off" - how wrong I was!)

My love affair with Belgian technology was begun - a visit to Liege revealed a product that I thought would sell to my customers, a demo was arranged for B Sky B, the then sales manager at EVS, Yves Rolus and myself started a journey to Scotland, in the height of winter, arrived very late due to the weather, demonstrating the dual channel HCT2 thus the EVS story began - the rest is history. Just for the record, the first system I purchased was a thirty second RAM recorder and I had to re-mortgage my house to raise the additional £45,000 necessary to upgrade this to a

more useful three minutes. Again in the interest of fairness, there were a couple of competitors around, the "Sky-Mo" and the Tektronics "Profile" - these were used but had a limited life.

Where next? Well, the Belgians strike again! I had seen various poor resolution video sequences produced by either Photron or Phantom industrial / military high speed cameras - the usual things, crash testing, bullets leaving guns shafts etc. Wouldn't it be good to apply this technology to my industry? Have no fear, the I-Movix team were on the case. Another visit to Belgium required, Mons this time! A small start-up company had integrated a Phantom high speed camera into the broadcast environment. This product I had to have and I became their first customer. As with all high speed cameras, light levels were an important factor, so this early device was of limited use but my main customer, Sky Sports, were keen to use the technology.

OK - I guess after my potted history of TV Slow-Motion, I should get to the point of this article - the next revolution in slow-motion, actually shall we call it Ultra-Motion? Let's see a football tackle at 750fps, a dart leaving a players hand at 1000fps, a golf-ball being hit at 1500fps, a horses hoof land on grass at 2000 fps - you will witness images never seen before! That is where the revolutionary I-Movix Sprintcam Vvs can bring new life into your TV production - the only limit is your imagination. Take a look at the video sequences at www.I-movix.com and start your voyage into Ultra Motion.

The Sprintcam Vvs bought to you by I-Movix is a Phantom powered high speed camera, combined with a full broadcast integration - available now from Editec! The Phantom 640 or 641 is at the heart of this product, it is a dual output device that can appear on the vision mixer as a "live" camera source, whilst at the

same time provide an Ultra-Motion replay. It is also the only solution using the latest and most sensitive camera available. What does this mean to you, the end user?

As you know, most high speed cameras will produce usable images in bright sunlight, but when the clouds appear the images will often disappear into noise and become virtually unusable, this is where the improved sensitivity of the Vvs will be invaluable. You can now have a high speed replay facility on your Rugby game that starts at 5pm, or your indoor Darts event. With an infinitely variable frame rate, if the light level drops too low, you can very quickly lower the frame rate to allow continued use of the camera.

I-Movix, the next Belgian success story? Only time will tell, but don't be surprised if you see a Sprintcam (or two) in every OB truck - worldwide - you have been warned!

Our current clients include: Sky Sports, ITV Sport, BBC Wales, ESPN, Duke and Earl Productions, RTE. Who's next?

Steve Cotterill is well known in the UK OB marketplace. He began his career at Central TV as an ACR operator and MCR engineer before moving on within the group to become VT supervisor at 021 Television. He launched Editec around 20 years ago and was responsible for introducing the now industry standard EVS product in the UK, demonstrating the product worldwide during the early years of EVS. He is now responsible for bringing the I-Movix range of high speed cameras into the UK.

For further information about this exciting technology, feel free to contact Steve, Paul or Hayley at Editec on +44 116 272800.

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