

XDCAM HD & HDV AN IDEAL MIX

Jake Southall at 2Dogs Post v
Marcus Gillezeau with rural firefighters >

"Sony's XDCAM HD is an obvious choice for anyone currently working with HDV equipment," said producer, author and principal partner in Firelight Productions, Marcus Gillezeau.

"For me to upgrade to XDCAM HD would cost perhaps \$40k for the field kit, and \$30k in post-production for top-of-the-range gear.

"Would I buy a kit and integrate it with our existing production pipe, the answer is 'Yes, absolutely'," he said, "It gives me a production company with an extremely sophisticated HD system that's likely to amortise over just two or three productions."

Sony's XDCAM HD PDW-F350 camcorder brings new opportunities to producers familiar with the Sony HDV-Z1P HDV camcorder. Gillezeau has used the F350 to complement or replace the HDV camcorder in three recent productions.

"On the TV series *In the Line of Fire*," said Gillezeau, "we follow a rural fire service over the period of a summer, and I needed to be able to shoot on a very compact and sturdy camera suitable for dusty and dangerous environments – I chose the Z1P. With the camera, a backpack and fire protective clothing, I could go out for 24 hours and do everything.

"But as we were shooting it became obvious that we needed an 'A' camera for the fire control centres, and we were fortunate to get access to the PDW-F350 when it became available. It was perfect for that and for key character interviews, with the audio inputs, flip-out monitor, low-light monitor and other versatile features. We also used it for long lens material, like water-bombing helicopters – the HDV doesn't really have the lens for that," he said.

In the Line of Fire was delivered on HDCAM masters and will air on the Nine Network.

Impressed by the XDCAM HD camcorder, Gillezeau and DOP Max Bourke decided to shoot another documentary *Surviving Lymphoma* exclusively with the new format.

"Digital BETACAM was out of our price range," said Bourke, "and the only other option would have been HDV. This way we did the job ten times better and still within the budget."

"Quality-wise, XDCAM HD is well ahead of the Z1P," he said. "There's less compression on the images, a better chip in the CCD, the resolving power is higher, the colours truer, and probably most importantly, you can interchange a



variety of professional lenses to extend your options.

"The new 1/2" Fujinon 13x3.3 we had was a beautiful, distortion free, wide angle. It made some of the observational sequences in the doco something special. Shooting on a boat, breaking through waves, we captured most of the cabin, some view and some crew in shot. And at the longer end, with the HD, when you find focus, it's beautiful."

"The combination of a black and white viewfinder and colour flipout LCD added to the versatility of the unit," he said, "Paul Maroni of Sony Australia took me through the setups for timecode, and the other menus, to help me make the transition."

XDCAM HD records at three different bit rates, including 25Mb/s specification meeting the HDV standard, making it ideal for integrating the cameras into a single production pipeline.

In post production, Gillezeau worked with Jake Southall of 2Dogs Post and was able to integrate the XDCAM HD deck seamlessly in to the existing pipe. "We did the offline on Final Cut Pro in DVPal and then re-conformed for online at full HD resolution," said Southall. "We then mastered back to the XDCAM HD and produced the Digibeta deliverables at the same time."

With the PDW-F350 at hand, Gillezeau and Bourke decided to integrate it with another production, the *Rock Eisteddfod Challenge*. This involved a travelling four-camera OB covering the high school students' performance competition that will air on Network Nine in October.

"We were effectively doing a 'suitcase OB', with a kit light enough to fly around," said Bourke, "and we'd been using two HDVs, one locked-off wide and another as Camera 2."

However, substituting the XDCAM HD camcorder as Camera 2 eliminated problems that occasionally emerged using two HDVs.

"Particularly at the larger gigs, the larger and longer lens of the XDCAM HD gave us the ability to get in tight, and to produce beautiful images. In addition, by substituting with the XDCAM HD, we only had to deal with the more limited colour control on one camera instead of two," he added. ■