

POST PRODUCTION



Technicolor DI's Stephen Nakamura Does 4K on Spider-Man 3

By Jack Egan

For colorist **Stephen Nakamura**, handling the digital intermediate for *Spider-Man 3*, Sony Entertainment's revenue-spinning summer blockbuster, presented both a new challenge and an opportunity.



Stephen Nakamura

The DI for *Spidey 3* was done in 4K, the first major 4K film for Technicolor Digital Intermediate as well as for Nakamura, who has previously done about 20 2K digital intermediates for the Technicolor division on films such as *The Aviator* and *The Departed*, both directed by Martin Scorsese, and more recently, director David Fincher's *Zodiac*.

The demanding *Spider-Man 3* project also presented a perfect way to put Technicolor's new state-of-the-art Westside DI facility, located on Sony's backlot in Culver City, through its paces.

"On a 4K DI you have more tools to work with and they're more powerful," says Nakamura. The most sophisticated new tool he employed was the latest da Vinci Resolve color corrector, which provided the latitude and options to enable a 4K DI. More software-based than earlier versions, Nakamura explained that "with the Resolve, I have more control over the picture. It's cleaner. And I can do more things selectively."

"It's possible to latch on to individual colors or highlights, say a character's skin tones, as well as secondary colors, and do a blur or a defocus on almost an unlimited number of channels," he explains. "Now at the same time, in the same shot, you can have a defocus blur on four, five, or six different keys that you're trying to pull, which is something that the 2K doesn't have. On a 2K you have

Please turn to page 20

Chris Evans, Ioan Gruffudd, Jessica Alba and Michael Chiklis in *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*

Supervisor Series: Craig Henighan Sound's Up: Mixing Sound for *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*

By Mark London Williams

Craig Henighan knows the shake, rattle and roll of superheroes: He was sound designer on *X-Men: The Last Stand* (and even performed the same duties for a pair of **Robert Rodriguez'** films, *The Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl*, and *Sin City*).

But as both sound designer and supervising sound editor on the latest *Fantastic Four* installment, *Rise of the Silver Surfer*, Henighan realized that his previous sound work was for the equivalent of superhero hodads—a sleek, silver-skinned Kahuna from the cosmos demanded "new sounds."

Working with supervising sound editor **John Larsen**, who oversaw auditory chores on the previous "FF" film, Henighan worked from the ground up to give the celestial tube shooter a distinct aural identity. "We recorded a fair bit—vehicles, cars," and he added a Doppler plugin to magnify the fast sounds he

was building—to make the arc of the Surfer's movements, the near and far, the before and after, appear distinct, to "bring the board to life."

"The board has its own power," Henighan says, perhaps inadvertently repeating a philosophical observation first uttered on Malibu Beach circa the mid-'60s (not coincidentally, around the time **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby** first invented the likewise philosophizing cosmic rider in the pages of the FF comic). So his character—with Larsen—was to "bring the board to life."

And life requires breath, and so too, the Zen concentration often required of surfing. Thus

it should be no surprise that Henighan notes that he used his own breathing as part of the surfboard's aural signature, performing what he calls "breath-bys" as the board—manned by actor **Doug Jones**, of *Hellboy* and *Pan's Labyrinth* fame, donning a special silver suit—rips through the atmosphere during show-downs with the heroic quartet, and later, his planet-destroying boss, Galactus.

As Henighan notes about the Surfer's board, "we didn't want to go with classic whoosh-bys," or even "flame-bys," which are generally reserved for the FF's own Human Torch.

Other elements that went into this particular surfin' sound including "recording big

Whiffle balls—they make great little sounds," which anyone who's mastered throwing a fastball with one of the plastic orbs already knows. Henighan would tie them to a string, and "woosh" them around, recording the sound.

"The Silver Surfer is very fluid, he has a grace to him," Henighan declares. And while he keeps refining the Surfer's sounds, it literally started with fluid: for the trailer, he took various oils, and water, and poured them over sheet metal, moving them around with his hand as he recorded effects that could only be called tubular.

But all was not honkers and wipe-outs in the mixing room—there were other sounds to attend to. Among those, returning nemesis Victor von Doom, an "electrical-based" aural identity, and Reed Richards, who can stretch and is mixed with more rubbery, elastic-y sounds.

And while the sounds them-

Please turn to page 20



Craig Henighan



John Larsen



Chris Evans as Johnny Storm in *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*

Craig Henighan

Continued from page 19

selfes may differ, Larsen notes of his collaboration with Henighan that it's all "very similar to what we did on *X-Men*." Though here, there was the added challenge on the "Surfer" side—that of dubbing in a separate voice, since actor **Lawrence Fishburne** was hired to give voice to the character's quantum-fueled introspection. "The scenes we've mixed so far," he notes, "it kind of works," he says, of Fishburne's stentorian tones.

"I like the dynamics in his voice," Larsen adds.

He also likes Henighan's industriousness. "Craig spent a lot of time getting mock-ups," he notes, referring to early versions

of key VFX sequences.

On that note, Henighan—giving "credit to everyone involved" for getting so much done on so short a production schedule—maintains that "we get (them) as early as we can—we know visual effects will come in last." He adds that he also goes to "the effects screenings," to get the lowdown as soon as he can. "You get descriptions, you get ideas, but the thing is to get stuff into the **Avid**."

And it is there, in the **Avid**, that the whoosh-bys and flame-bys and Zen breaths all become aurally transformed thanks to **Pro Tools**.

The mix is "all **Pro Tools** based," he says, which Larsen describes as "a really new thing on big soundstages."



John Larsen, Gary Bourgeois, Craig Henighan, Greg Orloff, Fred W. Peck and Bob Kizer

Henighan says directors appreciate being able to use the mixing software to "bat stuff around." And not just the director, in this instance. But, as

Larsen notes, studio execs and **Marvel** execs, each with their own "potential ideas" of how formerly 2-D pen and ink characters should look—and sound.

Those ideas get put through the **Pro Tools HD 7** software, (along with plugins), as needed, with music, etc., being blended in via the **Harrison** console used at Sony, where the film was mixed.

Henighan's aesthetic is to "keep it organic, or (at least) not so synthetic." He wants things to sound like they would if they really happened. "It's all about making sounds that fit the picture," he concludes.

Indeed.

Henighan and Larsen both declare it will be "vacation time after this." And it will be a well-deserved vacation once the surf and other sounds are locked.

No mention at all of whether they'll be bringing their own longboards.

Here When You Need Us

Avoid the costly hassle of searching for numerous suppliers. Count on Grainger for the products and services you need when you need them to keep your production running smoothly.

Grainger Benefits for the Entertainment Industry:

- Same Day Delivery
- More Inventory
- On Site Support
- National Coverage
- New Locations Dedicated to the Entertainment Industry In Culver City and Burbank
- 24/7 Emergency Service (Call 1-800-CALL-WWG)
- One-Stop Sourcing for all of Your Hard-to-Find Parts and Supplies
- Customer Specific Pricing Programs

For more information about Grainger's commitment to the Entertainment Industry, call your Entertainment Specialists:



Dave Molendyk: 213-400-5500 • Sylvia Lenze: 818-253-7972 • Mike Berger: 818-929-4611

Motors & Power Transmission • Electrical • Lighting • Test Instruments • Tools • Pneumatics & Hydraulics • Janitorial & Painting • Material Handling • Shelving & Storage Safety • Security • Fasteners • Metalworking • Pumps & Plumbing • HVAC/R

GRAINGER

Nakamura

Continued from page 19

basically one defocus board."

Nakamura estimates he spent 10 weeks of 12- to 15-hour days working on the *Spider-Man 3* digital intermediate. Director Sam Raimi was frequently present throughout the long slog as was Bill Pope, the film's director of photography. The DI was finished in April, a few weeks before the film's worldwide launch on May 5.

"Effects-heavy movies like this one always require spending much more time in the DI room than a normal movie," the colorist notes.

Spider-Man 2 also underwent a 4K DI. That was done by competitor EFilm, and at the time, it was a first for any feature film.

Sony's switch to Technicolor for the sequel was the result of the new strategic relationship between Sony and Technicolor Digital Intermediate that led to the construction of the new DI facility at the studio. However, the facility was so new that its laser recorder was not yet fully integrated, so EFilm in Hollywood handled the filmout. Deluxe Laboratories in Hollywood made the prints.

Sony has made a major commitment to 4K digital intermediates, but other studios are also coming around.

For Technicolor, its new satellite DI unit at Sony is the company's first studio-based digital interme-

mediate facility. It has three DI suites, two with the Resolve platform, and one with the Autodesk Lustre color corrector for 2K digital intermediates. It is connected to Technicolor's Burbank and Hollywood operations by a 10-gigabyte broadband pipe that is large enough to send finished films. It also offers access to the 14 Arri Laser film recorders housed in the Burbank facility.

Doing the DI at Sony conserved time and energy for director Raimi. "It saved him hours of driving across town," notes the colorist. "He could walk over here in two minutes."

Its proximity to other Sony postproduction units on the historic Culver City lot, especially Sony's world-class sound mixing facility as well as its special effects unit, was another big plus.

"One of the great things we did on this was to calibrate our look-up table for film with Sony Imageworks, where the effects were done," says Nakamura. "So when Sam was signing off on his effects there, he was seeing the same thing here. When you see an individual shot by itself, it doesn't mean that you may not tweak it later. But when he's in here, he has a confirmation that the shot looks like what he signed off at Sony Imageworks."

Next up for Nakamura: He's furiously finishing the DI for *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer* which Fox releases June 15. Then it's another sequel, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, with Matt Damon.

STUDIO AIRCONDITIONING

Rentals & Sales of Portable A/C Units & Heaters

- Package Units/ Chillers
- On Call 24 Hours A Day
- Gas and Electric Heaters
- On Any Location
- 10 & 20 Ton Air Handlers
- 1-100 Ton Capacity
- Portable Rolling Units

Our Reliable Rolling Units Are Ideal For Cooling Down Any Practical Location Or Hot Set.

For Our Reasonable Rates & Reliable Service **Call 818-222-4143** We Guarantee The Best Service In Town

www.studioair.com