



D-5 DECK
Neal or his assistant can use the D-5 deck to record the output from his Avid DS Nitris system or bring D-5 material in.



AVID DS NITRIS BOX
For all the functions the Nitris box enables Neal to perform, it takes up surprisingly little rack space.



PATCH BAY
Neal uses a Linux interface and SDI-routed cables to patch into the larger DreamWorks storage system.



TABLET
For all his editorial, graphics and effects work, Neal swears by his Wacom tablet.



AVID DS NITRIS STORAGE
Neal has over 10TB of local storage. He initially imports files from DreamWorks large DDR system.

PHOTOS BY JON SILBERG

PAUL NEAL

FACILITY: DREAMWORKS ANIMATION

Part of DreamWorks Animation's process of creating animated features involves holding numerous screenings for filmmakers, executives and test audiences as the films take shape, and the format of choice for projection is HD D-5 tape.

The animation itself is scalable to many sizes, and the ultimate product used for filmout is generally in the form of DPX files. But the editorial department uses a smaller, compressed version for work in their Avid systems. The core of online editor Paul Neal's job is to bring the files in their larger format into his Avid DS Nitris system from a very large disk array in another part of DreamWorks' facility in Glendale, California, and use the same tool to recreate all the effects and transitions that the editorial department used to aug-

ment the original animation files, very similarly to the way some shows whose final mastering format is D-5 are actually finished. "I generally work with the first assistant editor and the lead editor to make sure that my output for the screenings is as close as possible to the editors' original intent," Neal elaborates. The Avid DS Nitris system, he adds, "is extremely flexible. We can do 4:4:4 and 4:2:2, 720 and 1080. We can work in 23.98, 59.94, 24p and anything else you can think of. It has a subtitle function that lets me take the titles and timings and create a version for another country. I've even done some of that in DPX for filmout but I have to wait for it to render. The Nitris could work with the files in real time, but I would have to bring them into local storage."

Though he has over 10TB of local stor-

age on a media array inside Neal's editing room, it would still be unwieldy and generally not worthwhile just to manage the large DPX files for the occasional trailer or promo piece he'd work on. "All of my paint fixes and graphics are done within the DS using its tools," he says. "And every time Avid increases capabilities of DS, it lets us keep things in house instead of having to release out to people. When they purchased the system they didn't realize it had subtitling capabilities."

When DreamWorks purchased the Nitris DS, he adds, they didn't realize all the things it could do. "It can work with TIFF, DPX and Cineon files — all these formats. I pay attention to what my bosses need and if there's something they want to send out of house that we can do here, I point it out. We've been able to save hundreds of thousands of dollars by doing work right here on the Nitris."

But those extra services aside, Neal explains the core of his job this way: "I allow other people to do their job without ever having to stop to fix something for a screening." — *Jon Silberg*