

the preview

issue 11

the customer newsletter for Finline Media Finance

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F I N E L I N E

spring 2007

View from the **top**



Gareth Wilding, Director

"The only thing constant in life is change"

François de la Rochefoucauld

If you thought the market was going to settle down any time soon, think again.

I make no apologies if this theme is becoming boring, it is merely a barometer of the industry. The Mill has been sold, Pepper has joined forces with Future Film, Edit Video has closed down after 21 years, TV Set Group has grown by acquisition of both Halo and Metropolis, Oasis went into administration and was promptly snapped up by Sanctuary who had recently effected an MBO, The Picture Canning Company went into liquidation. At the same time private equity companies are still looking for further investment opportunities, and new companies have emerged including TSI Broadcast, Unit Post, The Look and Axis Post – the latter two featured in these pages.

And amongst all the change the technological evolution continues apace as Tapeless Workflow and Digital Intermediate seem to be the current conversation topics pre-NAB.

Have a safe trip to Vegas.

Samuel and
the Decode team



Becoming established & *remaining competitive*

"I wouldn't have the business I have if it wasn't for Fineline!" Samuel Martin, Decode's founder and Managing Director unequivocally states.

"We have been in business for just over 3 years and without financing we would have never got off the ground. Fineline worked with us in those early days when we had no credit record and very little business to justify their faith in us. We are now a substantial business, but we still need finance to keep us moving forward and keep us competitive."



Pop artist Vicky Nolan shooting her latest pop promo

Decode is a rapidly developing broadcast equipment hire, production and post production company. Fineline has helped them finance a range of production equipment for hire including Zeiss film lenses, grip and production kit (tracks and dollies) and broadcast equipment.

Decode's Account Manager at Fineline, Chris Biggs, explains, "When we first started dealing with Decode, the company was of a very modest size, with a very limited range of financial information available. As such, we had to put facilities together based on our knowledge of the specific equipment being funded, the hire and production markets and the potential of the business to succeed.

We recently helped Decode fund a wide range of film equipment, including a couple of follow focus units and two sets of Zeiss 35mm film lenses. Purchased directly from an American supplier, these presented shipping, foreign currency and importation issues. We were able to accommodate their needs due to the flexible way in which we structured the deal and the bespoke nature of the documentation we put together."

Samuel takes up the story, "We now supply equipment to all the UK's main terrestrial TV channels, the BBC, ITV and Channel 4. One of our most recent projects involved hiring out dollies, cameras and lighting kit for the BBC's *Moon Monkeys* TV pilot produced by leading indie production company Avalon TV. We have supplied camera equipment to a couple of other pilots

from BBC and have recently been involved in an increasing number of TV productions and music videos.

Our production and post production side of the business is getting a facelift in the coming weeks. We are expanding our facilities by taking over the entire building where we are based and renovating a new floor to accommodate a production office and a couple of Avid Adrenaline HD suites.

We are also installing a grading suite to complement our production department, that has recently completed post work on commercials from Unicef and Oxfam's *Make Poverty History* campaign. On the music video front we have recently finished editing and grading videos for Jamaican artist Luciano, pop artist Vicky Nolan and many more.

There are plenty of interesting developments to come in the months ahead as Decode settles down and all the new aspects of the business take shape. In three years we have come from nowhere. Fineline helped make it happen."

www.decodeuk.com



Chris Biggs
Fineline

Axis *acts on DI*

One key to a successful business is knowing a good opportunity when you see one. Another is knowing a good finance company to let you act on the opportunity. Luckily, both of these axioms came together for Axis Films recently when it was looking to set up a new outfit to take advantage of the growing interest in Digital Intermediate.

With financing from Finline, after a year-long gestation period Axis Post was born: a fully-fledged DI facility built around Quantel's high-end Pablo grading system.

"We talked to a number of different people as we always will but we've ended up back at Finline for a number of reasons, not least of which is that they know our business and they react a lot more promptly than traditional sources of finance like banks," explains Axis Post MD, Paul Carter. "They can give us an answer within 24 hours and, on the camera side of the business in particular, that's vital. When we secure a project, the equipment has to be purchased then and there. We can't spend three months getting the facts and figures together for

someone else to decide whether we're creditworthy or not."

Co-owned with DI specialists Digital Praxis and editing company Warrenfilms, Carter is convinced that they've got the people right. Based at Shepperton Studios, there can be little doubt Axis Post has got the location right too, especially for the potentially lucrative dailies market. "The timing is slightly ahead of the curve, admittedly, but when DI really kicks off – and it will – Axis Post is going to be in the ideal position to take advantage of it."

"There's an increasing acceptance of DI in the film industry and the market is growing rapidly," comments Quantel's Geoff Mills. "We're delighted to see Axis Post setting up a DI facility out at the studios and showing their confidence in Quantel by putting Pablo at the heart of their business."

And, if all goes to plan, it will be at the heart of it for a long time yet to come too. "By buying into the Quantel Pablo we're buying into the top end of the market which should help future-proof us," says Carter. "We're 2k now and we can upgrade to 4k should the need require it. It's a long-term investment."

www.axispost.co.uk

Wozy at the helm of the Axis Pablo Suite



Jodie Kidd in Fashion Avenue



Brighton TV *fashionable alternative*

In just 6 short years Brighton TV has become the 8th largest facilities house outside of London. Jon Lee, Facilities Manager for Brighton TV explains this rapid growth, "There are 5 key ingredients - top of the range equipment, a talented workforce and a relaxed working environment. Add in unstinting customer service and hard work and you have the formula."

And just to prove the point Jon lists some of their most recent clients - Discovery Real Time, Animal Planet, Gallery HD, Ultra HD, Ricochet South, Lambert Productions, E! Entertainment, The History Channel, Electric Sky, BBC, Channel 4 and ITV. One of their most recent projects was *Fashion Avenue* with Jodie Kidd for Ultra HD.

Earlier this year, Brighton TV completed Phase I of an investment programme by acquiring new premises, new HD online equipment and brought its central Machine Room online. Phase II saw the acquisition of five new Avid edit suites and centralised media storage.

Brighton TV's relationship with Finline and their Account Manager Chris Biggs goes back a long way. Chris outlines the relationship, "Since the inception of Brighton TV we have been able to provide them with the financial support necessary to help them build the business. Wise investment in the

latest technology has been a key element in their success."

Recent acquisitions include 5 Avid Media Composers, an Apple Final Cut Pro Editing System, Sony HVR-Z1E Camera, Sony HDW-730S Hi Def Camera Kit and a Sony HDW-M2000 VTR.

Jon discusses the Finline relationship: "Finline has been our finance partner from the outset. They make technology acquisition easy because they understand our business, the technology and the jargon. But at the end of the day they have to be competitive, otherwise no deal."

The last word goes to Chris, "A company like Brighton TV needs to continually re-invest in new facilities and new technology in order to be competitive and provide the high levels of service that have become their hallmark. Finline has played its part in their success."

www.brighton.tv

Evolutions

win big at Broadcast Awards

On a cold January night at the Grosvenor House Hotel, Simon Kanjee, Managing Director of Evolutions celebrated his birthday by winning Broadcast's Best Post Production House Award.

After a busy year with the acquisition of post house Nats, a major re-brand and providing post production on leading shows such as *The Apprentice*, *Top Gear* and *Shipwrecked*, the award was the



Simon Kanjee accepts his award from Avid's Sean Bradley

perfect recognition from the industry and its clients.

Simon Kanjee looks back on the year; "We took the view that the media business was entering a period of consolidation and in order to continue to provide the quality and flexibility of customer service we would need to expand our facilities and suites. When the opportunity came to make the Nats acquisition we needed to move incredibly quickly. That's when the speed and flexibility of the Fineline team was essential."

Evolutions Television and Nats both offered full post production facilities, but in slightly different markets. When the

opportunity arose to purchase Nats it provided the perfect fit for Evolutions. The combined business, operating under the Evolutions Television banner, is now the largest independently owned facility in Soho with over 80 suites spread over four locations.

Simon continues, "The effect of the acquisition was to double the size of the business overnight. Working out the legal and financial arrangements was complicated enough, but at the same time we were determined to ensure that we maintained the friendly and personal service that both companies were famous for."

Fineline Account Manager Chris Biggs outlines the deal, "The key to helping Evolutions achieve their ambition of acquiring Nats was in the flexibility and innovation of the financing scheme we were able to put in place. We created a commercial loan, secured by a Chattels Mortgage, based on equipment already owned by Evolutions. Few banks or finance houses would have the scope and flexibility to create such an innovative deal and turn it around in such a tight time-scale."

Simon sums it all up, "The synergy of the two businesses has been a great success due to the fact that both teams have integrated so well whilst still maintaining their own identity and character. Fineline played its part by putting together a creative funding package at very short notice."

www.evolutions.tv

HD in the Mix



SOUNDS
IN MOTION

You don't often hear of audio specialists looking to upgrade to HD, but with 5.1 an increasingly important part of the equation it's no surprise that they're starting to think along those lines.

One of the first to do so is Cardiff-based audio post house Sounds in Motion. The company is a strong regional player, with ITV1 Wales accounting for around 40% of its business, and it covers everything from daily programming through to film and drama work. They are also one of BBC Wales' preferred suppliers. "We're always happy to pick up any overspill work on high profile local productions such as *Dr Who*," says MD, Dai Shell.

The company has recently refitted three of its four theatres. All of its audio desks have been upgraded with bigger, faster processors, and more i/o, its audio and video (now HD) networks have been

overhauled by systems specialists Quadlogic, and an HD projector installed in its main theatre. "You most definitely do hear with your eyes on occasions," says Shell. "People have made decisions to re-edit once they've come here and seen on a larger screen what they may have missed on an Avid."

And the Fineline difference? "They know that technology moves on, and aren't frightened when an audio company start using words like HD," says Shell appreciatively.

www.simpost.co.uk

The Hackenbacker team display their award



Fineline sponsors Conch award

In September 2006 we extended our continued support of UK Post & Services when we presented the "Best Audio on a TV Drama - One off" award to Hackenbacker for *Krakatoa - The Last Days* at the inaugural Conch Awards.



It was a well attended event with an incredible atmosphere and the celebrations went on late into the night. We would like to congratulate all the winners, and especially all at UK Post & Services for their excellent arrangement of the event. We thoroughly look forward to the 2007 Awards.



www.ukpost.org.uk/conch

The sky's *the limit*

Whilst familiar with the facilities of Wardour Street and Dean Street, Fineline also works with companies that operate a bit higher than street level – Helicopter Film Services is one of these. The company was formed in 1993 by aerial cameraman and DoP Jeremy Braben and has recently been involved in high-profile feature films including *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *His Dark Materials: Golden Compass*, *Outlander*, *Mission: Impossible 3*, *Hot Fuzz*, and *The Oxford Murders*.

Jeremy has been working with the Fineline team for a long time and has recently made major kit purchases as part of a big expansion of the company's services, which include filming for commercials, dramas and music videos.

The initial purchase was for 2 Wescam gyro-stabilised systems, one of which was modified solely for HD. The F-435 has been upgraded and modified with their patented platform for 35mm, 16mm and HD - including the Panavision Genesis and Arri D-20 HD Cinema cameras. The latest purchase was for a new Arri 435 Extreme camera from Arri GB.

The Wescam 24HD is based in Scandinavia and working for broadcasters and programme makers in the region. The unique Wescam F-435 allows shooting



The Wescam F435 configured with Panavision Genesis on set for *His Dark Materials: Golden Compass*

with all the Arri 435Ex features like 1-150fps and variable shutter, all controlled remotely, or the options to shoot in 3-perf 35mm and HD 4:4:4.

Commenting on why he uses Fineline Jeremy adds; "They are competitive and helpful and Gareth is always there to lend an ear and advise on our purchase financing and prepare a package that suits our future expansion plans."

www.helicopterfilm.tv

F435 in action on location in Turkey



John Mayes enjoying his new suite



Moving *Marshall Street*

After six years based in a four-room townhouse, commercials specialist Marshall Street Editors found itself rapidly running out of space for editors, kit and clients. It's a common problem, especially as the industry has changed over the past few years.

"A lot more people are actually involved in the process than before," says the company's John Mayes. "So the new building was very much about the environment, building bigger edit suites and making it a comfortable space for people to come and work."

Not only did Marshall Street need more room, but its kit was in need of an upgrade too. That meant seven new Avid suites and 6TB of EditShare storage on top of the building costs, which Fineline was able to finance alongside the renovations.

"The deal with Fineline was fantastic,"

says Mayes. "I think if I was having to borrow the money from two or three different places it would have been tough to have had all new equipment."

Eight weeks of building work later, and the company not only had room to breathe, but had expanded at a stroke from three to seven editors. And, perhaps more importantly, the move has been popular.

"The space gets a fantastic response from our clients," says Mayes. "They love it, which is the main thing."

www.marshallstreet.co.uk

High-performance network

allowing different facets of the entertainment industry to work together seamlessly

Dave Scammell, Sohonet's CEO comes straight to the point, "Sohonet is the first and largest high-bandwidth connector for the global entertainments industry, providing the world's surest path for transferring digital content."

Engineers extending the Sohonet network



With a global network of ultra-high-speed connectivity allowing data to be transferred anywhere in the world at Gigabit speed, subscribers on the system already include Warner Bros, Universal, HBO, and Pinewood and Shepperton Studios (UK) among many others.

Dave continues, "Sohonet delivers the connectivity that allows the many different facets of the entertainment industry to work together seamlessly, wherever they happen to be in the world. Co-operative working means having access to the best technicians and technologies in the world without leaving your desk.

However, our success, and the rapid take up of our services, placed increased pressure on our infrastructure. We needed to install new Foundry Networks routers to meet the demand. This was a significant investment, I contacted Gareth Wilding at Finline as they have been integral to the media industry for many years and their continued sponsorship and support of trade body UK Post & Services stood them out from the rest."

Ken Cheng, Vice President, Foundry Networks explains, "We were delighted to be involved in this project and provide Sohonet with the kind of high capacity metro network that is needed in the media industry. The NetTron MLX routers give them the network capability to handle large volumes of graphics and data



traffic enabling the company's media clients to share films and images quickly and easily, whilst providing superior quality of service.

High-performance networks are vital to ensure a high-quality experience for users of next generation applications. A common infrastructure can be used for the delivery of multiple services or applications, lowering capital costs and ongoing operational costs significantly."

Gareth adds, "Our job is not just to provide finance. We do our best to take away as much bureaucracy and administration as possible so that our clients can get on with their jobs. In this case the equipment was arriving by shipping agents from the US so we had to deal with VAT payments to release goods from bond. This all had to take place on the last working day before Christmas so that the equipment was released in time for Sohonet to install during their only available downtime between Christmas and New Year. It was close but we made it!"

Dave has the last word, "Sohonet provides the infrastructure to enable studios to easily accommodate the 'next generation' of content creation and digital workflow technologies. Finline helped to make this happen without us having to seek out major investment."

www.sohonet.co.uk

FineCox Golf Challenge

Gareth Wilding is seen reluctantly handing over the trophy to Steve Biucchi

Finally the hegemony was broken. At Beaconsfield Golf Club on 10th October the Snell & Wilcox team claimed the FineCox Claret Jug Trophy for the first time. I am at pains to point out that it was not merely a well earned victory, more a humiliating drubbing - so much that the scores are not to be reproduced here!

The Finline team are eager to resume normal service and the Spring challenge is due to take place in May, after everyone has recovered from NAB. If you have not previously been invited to join us it is most likely because we do not know you are a golfer, so if you would like to be included in the next event please email at martin.stanley@finline.co.uk



The individual prize was won by Paul Vahey from St. James's Place Partnership



Second prize was won by Alan Henry from Barco

The "Best Host" prize was claimed by Simon Adler of Snell & Wilcox



Simon Kay from TVP Group hit the longest drive



and with a touch of Blarney, Jono O'Reilly from BPS was nearest the pin

www.snellwilcox.com



Thomas Urbye
already at home
in his new suite

Soho gets the Look

An ex-MPC creative has founded a new London HD/DI facility based on the eQFX. The facility, The Look, is the latest boutique HD/DI facility to open in London, having recently worked with Finline on its set-up.

Once he had chosen a Quantel eQ system to sit at the heart of its workflow, founder and Managing Director Thomas Urbye worked with Finline to build the rest of the facility and finance the HD monitors, projector and audio monitors.

Thomas selected the eQ to enable him to build a business on just one machine. "With the eQ I can work on the whole project – conform, tweak the cut, online, grade, do visual effects, even title it, then finally play it all out; it's unique," he enthuses.

Urbye knows a thing or two about HD & DI, having been an iQ colourist &

operator at The Moving Picture Company for four years prior to setting up the new company. "I was introduced to Gareth Wilding well over a year ago," says Urbye. "The reason I decided to work with Finline was simple, they were friendly and professional from the outset, always returning calls, keeping me up to date with developments, and importantly they have a very good understanding of the post production industry."

www.thelooklondon.com



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