



FIVE STAR?

The latest version of Discreet's edit* has a collection of tools that have propelled it into the mid-to-high range of non-linear editors. Mike Salmond takes a test drive

Discreet has made some bold moves in its quest to corner the high-end as well as lower-end (or 'prosumer') digital video production market. With products like flame and smoke being installed in Hollywood-style production studios all over the world, edit* offers an amazingly similar amount of power to the lower-end user. I use those words with care as the distinction between low-end and the high-end seems to be decreasing on a monthly basis. Many of the features that edit* offers are only slightly scaled-down from its big brothers in million dollar Hollywood-style facilities.

edit* offers some really powerful tools and high production qualities that pretty much dwarf most other PC NT-based products of the same price on the market. So, along with Discreet's quest for neater, faster, higher production value and quality products comes the much anticipated edit* 5.0.

It is Discreet's hope that this version will slip into the space recently occupied by Avid. In what is seen by some as a somewhat irrational recent move, Avid decided it no longer wanted to spend time with the 'low-end' of production and moved out of this market area.

Avid to change

This was opportune timing for Discreet and its edit* product. I speak from personal experience as, up until a few months ago, I used Avid MCXpress as my DV/analog non-linear editing package. I got the news from Avid that it would no longer be supporting my product and it was, in effect, abandoning ship by offering no further upgrades.

I was left with a clear choice - upgrade to an extremely high-end DV suite (at an equally high-

end cost), or find myself another non-linear editing application. How fortuitous then, that along should come Discreet and its product: edit* 4.5.

The price was right and my initial research suggested that Discreet was stepping into the same gap left by Avid. My initial interest was further reinforced by a hefty discount from Discreet for edit* should I turn in my now almost useless Avid MCXpress disks.

As a fairly new user to edit* I have to admit to becoming frustrated with some aspects of edit* 4.5 - quite often I found myself asking "why don't it have this feature?" or "why can't I do that?" However, to give edit* 4.5 its dues these questions did fall amongst many moments of enthusiasm when faced with the radical differences between edit* and MCXpress. Not least the radically improved render times, as I discovered that those night-long renders were being cut to a fraction.

So, naturally I was expecting good things of edit* 5.0 - I was hoping Discreet would have addressed many of the features I would be looking for in a major upgrade of this type. And lo and behold it would appear that Discreet actually allowed their programmers to be feature-led by - editors. From my first experiences with the new version it became increasingly obvious that Discreet had been asking the right questions to the right people.

These collaborations have formed the foundation for the next generation of NLE. The list of new or improved features is pretty impressive and here I will take you through the main ones in the hope of illuminating those 4.5 stalwarts eagerly awaiting 5.0 as well as those new to edit*.

Hardware issues

Before getting to the meat of the matter - I need to address some hardware issues. I have to admit that my PC is not the suggested retail box from Discreet (an IBM or Compaq machine) but is pretty much a built-by-hand dual Pentium PII 450MHz with 256Mb RAM and 60Gb of SCSI hard disk with a Targa RTX board (analog).

I mention my PC because I am offered only 'limited' technical support from Discreet as I am not using the 'approved' hardware (can't really blame Discreet for doing this with all the Frankenstein PC's out there, it just makes tech support's job that much harder).

My reseller set up the edit* suite with a Matrox DigiSuite card (dual 19" monitors) and did the full software install. Discreet has still been helpful when I have encountered software problems - way better than Media100 people who would either sell me the whole enchilada of 'approved' hardware and software or just give me the card, software and then wash their hands of me. This, to me, was another reason for choosing Discreet's edit*. Partial support has to be better than none at all.

One of the nicest touches is in the customization of a lot of edit*. In a similar manner to the improvements made in the 3D Studio MAX R3 interface, Discreet has catered for the option that you may be either a part of a team or that the edit* PC is shared by other users.

In realizing this, the company has introduced customizable layouts for edit* as well as network capabilities for sharing files and workflow. This is very useful for those amongst