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## Mega Playground Tunes DP Dailies for Accuracy, Efficiency Can Smart Color Technology Save Your Feature \$100,000?

By Bryant Frazer  
April 30, 2009 Source: Film & Video

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One possible future for production, post and DI workflow is on offer as New York's Mega Playground introduces DP Dailies, a new HD dailies workflow built around Digital Film Technology's Bones Dailies system and aimed at the indie-film market in New York City. Company officials claim it can save feature-film producers more than \$100,000 over a conventional, two-pass dailies-and-DI workflow on a production shooting more than 250,000 feet of 35mm footage.

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Mega Playground's Eitan Hakami acknowledges that a big chunk of the projected cost savings — about \$40,000 — comes from the company's promise to create HD dailies at SD prices, but the secret sauce is a newly developed recipe for making sure dailies colors exactly match what the director and DP will later see in the DI suite. And because they are scanned as 1920x1080 DPX files, dailies can be used as source elements for preview screenings as well as the film's final DI. (They can also be archived immediately to RGB HDCAM SR tape.) That can shave another \$60,000 or so off costs if a second film-scanning step is eliminated, thus dramatically reducing the time required for conforming and color-grading. Presumably much of the work — as much as 95 percent, according to CTO Terry Brown — will already have been done during the workflows for dailies and previews. "When you're color-correcting your preview, you're really doing a DI," Brown says. "Your preview will look exactly like your final output."

By honoring the standardized color decision list (CDL) endorsed by the American Society of Cinematographers, Mega Playground can precisely maintain looks through all stages of the dailies, previews and DI process. As far as doing color-correction on set, Brown doesn't think that's an efficient way to go. "We can give feedback to the DPs on exposure" based on dailies screenings while the film is being shot, he says. "Maybe you want one LUT on set. But having gear on set to play with color slows down production."

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Additionally, Hakami figures more than \$20,000 can be saved in weekly rates for editorial and post staff who will spend less time engaged in the DI process, for a final tally of nearly \$125,000 in cost savings. Of course, your mileage may vary, depending on how likely your director and/or cinematographer are to start remaking color decisions during the DI process. And if you're shooting 'scope, you'll be doing a full 2K rescan anyway to maintain image quality.

Any number of cinematographers have stories about working on projects where, to their horror, the director became attached to the decidedly imperfect color characteristics of low-quality dailies scans. To fix that problem, Brown, who was the project manager for *Bones* Dailies when it was originally developed at Technicolor, has developed a look-up table that allows imagery on the Panasonic plasma screens used in the dailies process to precisely mimic the projected image from the 2K DLP DI projector in Mega Playground's 2K DI suite. In a side-by-side demonstration for *Film & Video*, the calibration was very close indeed — the differences were visible in the brightest highlights and in slight variations in some colors that revealed the characteristics of the display itself, but for the most part the pictures were an excellent match.

Hakami doesn't even like to call it an "HD dailies" process, preferring to stress the 1920x1080 image size — in terms of pixels, just about six percent smaller than a 2K scan (for 3-perf, that would be 2048x1152). Asked about the correlation between increased resolution and perceived image quality, Brown says pixel counts are overrated: "You don't need 4K — or even 2K — to make a film sell."

For more information: [www.mega-playground.com](http://www.mega-playground.com)



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