

# Editor cuts *Rice Rhapsody* on FCP

BY ROB TINWORTH

*Rice Rhapsody*, directed by Kenneth Bi, with Jackie Chan as executive producer, was released last month throughout Asia. First screened in 2004 at the Pusan International Film Festival in South Korea, it was selected to compete at the Tokyo International Film Festival and was nominated for two Golden Horse Awards for Best Actress (Sylvia Chang) and Best Original Film Score (Masahiro Kawasaki).

Prior to *Rice Rhapsody*, I did not have any editing experience on Apple's Final Cut Pro (FCP). So when I cut a new show reel on FCP, I was simply blown away by its extensive features and the tremendous flexibility it allowed. Coupled with AJA Video Systems' Io converter, it made a very impressive editing suite.

I made the call to cut *Rice Rhapsody* on FCP.

As Walter Murch had just finished editing the internationally acclaimed *Cold Mountain* on FCP, I was confident the soft-

ware would work. But editing away from home, I had only my Apple PowerBook G4. I approached Bi with the idea of cutting his film using FCP on the PowerBook.

"Will it work?" he asked.

"Of course," I replied.

Well, I knew it would work for a single scene. What I did not know was how it would cope with an entire film.

To back my overconfident words, I drafted Forest Chan of Hong Kong-based Viewcon Systems (Apple solutions provider) in to help me set up an editing studio in an afternoon in a furnished flat in Hong Kong.

The complete editing suite consisted of my Apple 17" 1.33GHz PowerBook G4, four 200GB FireWire hard drives, FCP 4.1, AJA's Io to digitalise component from Beta SP (to which the dailies had been tele-



Rob Tinworth was blown away by the Apple Final Cut Pro's "extensive features and tremendous flexibility" when using it for the first time in editing the movie *Rice Rhapsody* (left).



cined), a monitor, a mixer and a second computer monitor.

The FireWire drives were a cost-effective way to enable us to digitalise everything at a higher

resolution (DV in this case) of about 5:1, so that the pictures we were working with would look great. Each drive was cloned so that no editing time would be lost should one of the drives fail. This also allowed us to use multiple suites.

While editing *Rice Rhapsody*, the director was able to run an identical set-up off the backup drives, which allowed him to review the material and cuts as he edited the behind-the-scenes for the making-of feature.

In FCP, Apple has created a non-linear suite, built not around the principles of film editing but around the fundamentals of the computer world — virtually everything can be dragged and dropped, with

PowerBook, as it connected via FireWire. The box was so light that it was actually easier for me to take the entire suite (PowerBook, Io, FireWire drive) to the SP deck than for me to bring the deck to the suite.

Because the FCP suite could be set up anywhere, we hired a small flat for this project and made the cut from the lounge. (I'm a big believer that the working environment should be as comfortable as possible and it would be hard to come up with a more comfortable arrangement than this!)

My primary concern was how the PowerBook would behave towards the end of the edit when pushed — that is, with all the clips digitalised, three hours on the timeline, and key frames and effects all over the shop.

As we neared the end of the edit, I must confess to holding my breath on a few of the playouts. Bear in mind that I was not only pushing the software, but also cutting on a laptop (single processor 1.33GHz G4). I had anticipated a few

problems during playouts and was prepared for plenty of troubleshooting. But I was floored during the first full playout, when FCP played out a three-hour timeline — with real-time effects and 14 tracks of audio — without dropping a frame.

At the end of the edit, Cinema Tools (a component of FCP) was used to convert the time code into



AJA Video Systems' Io converter provides a simple, elegant plug-in solution for working with the Apple Final Cut Pro on a Macintosh G4 or G5.

clips and windows very easily manipulated. The editing interface is considerably faster than that of other suites I have worked with.

We also discovered a number of other advantages using FCP. These included secondary-colour correction, which allowed us to do a rough grade so that each cut looked a little more like the final product.

In addition, the suite was able to play back any number of audio tracks — a real plus, given the many sound effects and dialogue tracks that were added as the edit progressed.

AJA's Io allowed the preview of dissolves, titles and colour correction in real time, reducing disruption to the edit through rendering. The AJA box was also the only way to get the media into the

key numbers for the negative cutter.

The improved editing interface, cost and flexibility of both FCP and Io were all extraordinary, making for a great experience.

The *Rice Rhapsody* edit was remarkably smooth, incredibly comfortable and, above all, a lot of fun. And that's what editing is all about.

Rob Tinworth has a boutique post-production company called ten:one, based in Singapore. His documentary work has been highly commended for best editing (long-form) at the Asian Technical & Creative Awards for the past three years. *Rice Rhapsody* was his first feature film, and one of the first films in Hong Kong to be edited entirely on Apple's Final Cut Pro and the AJA Video Systems' Io converter.