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Post

R E V I E W

Taking a **BlueFish SD Envy** for a test swim

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Earlier this year I went to the NAB convention on a mission. I was ready to upgrade my Adobe Premiere 6.5 editing system to Premiere Pro 1.5, but was stuck using Premiere 6.5 because my video I/O card would not support Premiere Pro 1.5. I don't blame Adobe for this, but do blame the manufacturer of the card, because they could have supported their card with Premiere Pro, but chose instead to try and force me into changing my system over to their editing software. The problem was, I didn't want their editing software and viewed this as "techno-bullying." The point of this little digression is, I just wanted to move up to Premiere Pro 1.5 and I needed to find the right professional level video I/O card to get me there. The only requirements were that the card needed to give me SDI video in and out, and AES/EBU audio. A piece of cake... or so I thought.

SURPRISINGLY FEW CHOICES

What I discovered at NAB was there truly just weren't that many choices of video cards available at that time to edit using Premiere Pro 1.5 if you wanted SDI video in and out and AES/EBU audio. In fact, while several manufacturers were working on cards, one name that repeatedly came up in conversation was Bluefish444. I had actually never heard of them before, but after doing a little research I found that BlueFish444 is a division and brand name of Digital Voodoo, Ltd., an Australia-based company. I came to learn they've been providing OEM solutions to the developer market for quite a while. Because they seemed to be one of the few players in the Adobe Premiere Pro/SD/HD market, I knew to complete my mission at NAB, it would be important to take the BlueFish444 card out for a test swim with Adobe Premiere Pro.

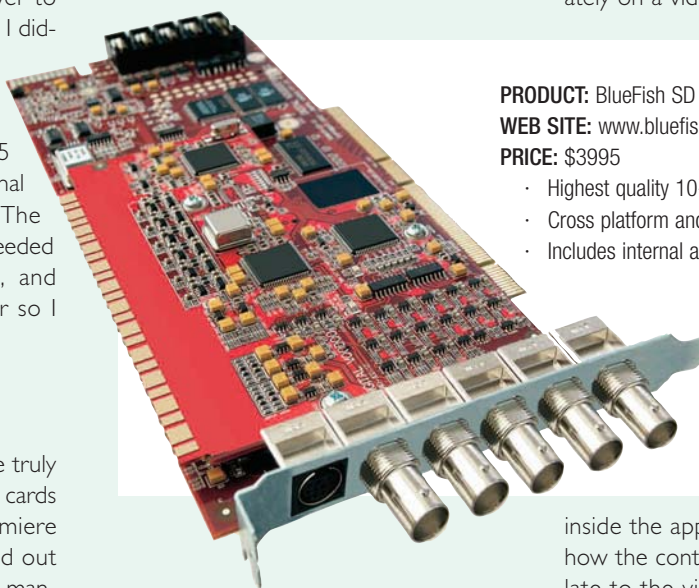
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR BLUEFISH SERVED?

BlueFish444 actually offers a wide range of high quality video I/O products to suit practically every level of need and application, from analog component to digital SD and HD. A quick trip to their Web site (www.bluefish444.com) will show you exactly what I

mean. My facility is not HD yet, so I chose their SD|Envy product for my test swim. It is a 10-bit dual-link SDI and 10-bit analog I/O card.

REALLY SWEET SUITE

The system I received was loaded with some very nice hardware. To begin, at the core of the system was the new HP Workstation 8200 with dual 64-bit Xeon processors. Not bad for starters.



PRODUCT: BlueFish SD Envy

WEB SITE: www.bluefish444.com

PRICE: \$3995

- Highest quality 10-bit 4:4:4 processing
- Cross platform and cross application capable
- Includes internal and external keying

VITAL STATS

For storage they sent a 1.2 TB Rorke Data SATA RAID with dual Fibre Channel connectivity. Nice. Last but not least was the SD|Envy card itself loaded with just about every type of in and out that you'd want in the analog and SDI world, all in 10-bit quality. The I/Os include composite, component, S-Video, dual-link SDI and an SDI key channel that allows for internal and external keying. Really nice. On the audio side, there are six channels of AES/EBU audio and it can be monitored in surround sound 5.1 in the highest quality balanced AES/EBU audio.

I tested the performance of the card using standard SDI input and two channels of AES/EBU audio. I input video from both a DVCPRO50 tape deck as well as directly from our studio via an SDI router. In both cases, using the high quality 10-bit 4:4:4 processing the SD|Envy card offers. The footage looked absolutely perfect and pristine on the component monitor connected directly to the analog outputs of the card.

FRAME BUFFER THIS, BABY

The combination of stellar SD image quality and the super fast data rates of the Rorke Fibre Channel array made editing in Premiere Pro 1.5 a pleasure. One thing I wasn't initially aware of was the frame buffering capabilities the smart folks at BlueFish had built into the card. This means you're able to see your work in Photoshop, After Effects and other applications displayed immediately on a video monitor while working right

inside the application. No more guessing on how the content your working on will translate to the video world after some lengthy render. The frame buffering of the card combined with the speed and power of the dual Xeon's opened up a whole new creative experience for me building composites. Once you've experienced creating composites this way, there's absolutely no way you'd want to do it any other way. The frame buffering capabilities of the SD|Envy card extend beyond Adobe products to others like Eyeon Digital Fusion, Discreet Combustion and several other applications.

Another little goodie that comes with the SD|Envy and other BlueFish cards is a handy application called Symmetry. It's a 10-bit RGB/YUV sequential capture and playback station. It supports sequential 10-bit RGB Cineon, DPX and 10-bit YUV QuickTime v210, the same used in Final Cut Pro. You ingest once, and then can use footage on multiple applications across platforms. From rough cut to compositing and high-end finishing, the same file is never re-rendered. How can you not like that?

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