

WHITEWATER MEDIA

Editing Under Fire

CUSTOMER:

Whitewater Media
Ibiza, Spain

APPLICATION:

Post production of the promotional video, *Journey to the Line*, for The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards' latest album, *Spirit of the Glen: Journey*, the Classical BRIT 2009 Album of the Year.

EQUIPMENT:

EDIUS Nonlinear Editing System



The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards were in the middle of making an album when they were posted to Iraq. But that didn't stop the completion of the album or the production of the album's promotional video. The proceeds from this album—*Spirit of the Glen: Journey*—and from the many tours the Dragoons undertake are charitable.

BACKGROUND

Taking the prize for album of the year at the 2009 Classical BRIT Awards were the pipes and drums of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards. *Spirit of the Glen: Journey* is a remarkable album in many ways—but perhaps most remarkable because a large part of it was recorded in the middle of a war zone, with sessions constantly threatened by rocket attacks.

This situation is reflected in the promotional video, *Journey to the Line*, which accompanies the album. It, too, was shot on location in Iraq, which is how Paul Bates of Whitewater Media, a veteran of the London post production scene and now an independent movie-maker specializing in music, found himself in the middle of the desert, in mid-summer, shooting and editing in a sandstorm.

Bates has a lot of contacts in the music business, so when Tom Lewis, the A&R manager at Universal Classics and Jazz, called him, it was not a surprise. The conversation, though, was to take an unexpected turn.

The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards have an important place in musical history: it was their recording of *Amazing Grace* in 1972 which topped the charts around the world and created a new audience for the highland bagpipes. More recently, they had a surprise hit with their 2007 album *Spirit of the Glen*, which mixed traditional pipe airs with popular music in inventive modern arrangements.

As well as being pipers, of course, they have a real job in the army: driving tanks. The band was halfway through recording a follow-up album when the regiment was posted to Basra, Iraq.

CALL TO ACTION

When Lewis called, it was to explain that Universal had decided to complete the recording in Iraq and to ask if Bates wanted to go to Basra to make the accompanying video. Bates thought about it for a moment or two, and knew that if anyone was going to go, he wanted it to be him.

Very soon afterwards, Bates found himself in the company of Pipe Major Ross Munro, flying from RAF Brize Norton to Qatar on the Gulf. From there they flew on to Basra in a Hercules, in flak jackets and helmets.

"It is far faster than anything else, especially when working in multiple formats. You tend to forget all the good things about EDIUS—it just works."

Paul Bates, Whitewater Media



"I am pretty amazed that I am able to do a painless, multi-stream, HD edit on a laptop, without worrying about video formats. And I love being able to output to Windows Media right from the timeline, or burn DVDs straight from the timeline—that is great for clients. With the latest release I can burn Blu-ray straight from the timeline which is even better. Everyone is shooting in HD now, so delivering in SD, even for viewing copies, is not ideal. Being able to give clients a Blu-ray disc is really powerful."

Paul Bates, Whitewater Media

Bates was shooting with the Sony EX1 solid-state camera, a relatively new model and format at the time. Although the camera was not tried and tested in desert temperatures, it worked flawlessly, although he did have to put it in a freezer occasionally as it became too hot to touch at times.

Although the music was recorded in a tent (nicknamed "Studio 2" for the duration, where the air conditioning failed to cope and the musicians struggled to keep their instruments in tune) Bates needed to get external shots for his video. Some of these featured the musicians—including a stunning sequence of Pipe Major Munro, in full highland dress, on the runway of Basra airport at dusk—but much of it featuring the men doing their day job. For this he was out and about, in the full heat of an Iraqi mid-summer, ever aware of the constant risk of attack.

At the time he was using Sony's proprietary SxS cards in the EX1 camera (Bates has now extensively tested off-the-shelf SDHD cards with the camera, which he finds perfectly robust and very cost-effective). On location he had ready access to the content to start cutting, working directly into the Grass Valley™ EDIUS® nonlinear editor.

Bates has EDIUS on his laptop so, with an SxS adapter, he could just drag and drop from the cards to see if what he shot was going to work. EDIUS edits right off the SxS card: there is no need to transfer the content to another drive. Using plug-ins and filters in EDIUS on the laptop, Bates could show Lewis what he had cut and where he thought they were going.

With the music recording and the shoot complete, Bates was ferried back to

the UK by the RAF. But before he could return to his home in Ibiza, Universal asked him to stop off in London to finish a rough cut for them.

From his laptop and an external drive, Bates could set up EDIUS and cut perfectly happily. He did a quick DVD of the piece in a couple of days. When he got home, he reopened the entire project on his main machine and just carried on working.

In his career Bates has used most editing platforms, looking for the solution with the right combination of power, flexibility, and stability. His first encounter with EDIUS technology came with the codecs built into Adobe Premiere 6.5. As the EDIUS editor came to maturity, it became a natural choice for him.

The regiment's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Felix Gedney, described the pipes and drums as "a very emotional form of music—it rouses a deep passion." The new album, *Spirit of the Glen: Journey*—perhaps the first to be recorded in a theater of war—was released at the end of 2008 and clearly captured the imagination of the public as the BRIT album of the year award is the result of a public vote.

You can watch *Journey to the Line*, Paul Bates' evocative video of a remarkable group of musicians, at www.vimeo.com/2386966.

"EDIUS has always been able to handle more codecs and formats than anything else. It does not matter what it is, you just put it on the timeline. And Grass Valley gives it good support, so when a new camera or format comes out they are quick to get it on EDIUS.

Paul Bates, Whitewater Media



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