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EFX uses Discreet Lustre to add hues to Rang De Basanti

Starring Aamir Khan, produced by Rakeysh Om Prakash Mehra (Directed by him too) and UTV Motion Pictures, Rang De Basanti one of the biggest releases of the year has sprung forth a colorful box office draw.

Interestingly the Digital Intermediate (including color tones and looks) for the cultist, gen next finds a cause movie, were done by Mumbai based EFX (VFX & Post production services arm of Prasad Group) using Autodesk Discreet Lustre.



Ken Metzker, Chief Colorist at Prasad EFX told Animation 'xpress "The director, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, had a very clear vision of the separation that was needed between the past and present looks to make the story work in a more powerful way.

The DoP, Binod Pradhan and I took this information and went through a series of possible looks on a varied set of the past sequences. This covered black and white, varying degrees of desaturation, colour tones, and mixed tones.

We recorded these looks and screened the print. From this we were able to get a better direction on which way we should NOT go.

Both the director and DoP were sure they did not want to produce a look that had been done a million times before. That narrowed down the possibilities and that is how we decided on a yellow tone (not sepia). This is the yellow tone that often happens on prints of photographs from the 20's and 30's. This was still just a black and white photo with a tone and did not do justice to the great depth that Binod had captured in the negative.

So the question was what could we do to give the image more depth and separation? Well, in the 20's and 30's photographers would often hand paint parts of the image to achieve more separation. Could we translate this to the big screen? Another set of tests with different degrees of saturation and tones and we had finally nailed the "Past" look. We would colour in the tone of the skin, foliage, fire, and other items that were useful in achieving depth and separation of the image and were important in helping to tell the story. This effect sounds very easy, but completing the "past" look in the required deadline, pushed us to utilize three Autodesk Discreet Lustres at one point.

Rakeysh had doubts of how the "past" look would work in context with the "present". Another test was put together, utilizing entire scenes of inter-cutting past and present scenes. After viewing this, we were able to start the timing of the past and had a good idea which direction we wanted to go on the "present".

Rakeysh and Binod had envisioned the "Present" to look very filmic. They did not want this portion of the film to scream DI. They wanted it to look very realistic in the print medium. It was decided it would be a touch on the cooler side. This was decided to aid in the separation between the "past" and "present".

Being a DI one has a lot of options. That does not mean you always choose to use them. By keeping the "present" filmic, I believe the VFX done on the film look very believable and do not detract the audience's attention from the story. I also know that Binod was able to fine tune how he wanted the present to look because of the DI process.

One such incident was the fire party night scene. On the long pan into this scene we have a very dark cityscape and a brighter party scene. By selecting the cityscape and increasing its brightness and contrast. And then moving this window as the shot is panned, so it would not affect the party scene's look; we were able to achieve more depth in the image and better establish the location in the movie.

In the same scene we have utilized windows and keys to darken and lighten certain areas in the image. This way we can have a very realistic fire lit night scene established in the audience's mind and yet still maintain enough illumination for clear definition of the characters and their expressions.

Pankaj Kedia, Regional Sales Manager, South East Asia & India, Autodesk Media and Entertainment added that "Rang De Basanti is one of the next-gen movie from Bollywood that's deploying DI to create a distinct feel in line with the story and theme. The technicians have used the correct mix of imagination and the functionality of DI on the Autodesk Discreet Lustre system, to optimize its usage and impact. What is striking about it is how color and the DI process are used to enhance the narrative. This is interwoven into the script with such expertise, that the outcome is mesmerizing."

- Anand Gurnani