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Icebergs and FilmStreams

By Staff

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Richard Welnowski traveled to Iceland with a Thomson Grass Valley Viper FilmStream camera to capture breathtaking scenes, even in low light, for the independent Icelandic/Norwegian feature entitled *No Network*. It's been described as an *Indiana Jones*-style movie for kids.

The feature was shot in Iceland over three months (November to January 2007) and in London for a week, where a live polar bear was shot against greenscreen. *No Network* is now in postproduction in Iceland and will be finished in Belgium and Germany. It will be entered in a number of film festivals in November and released to theaters in Europe this Christmas. (Subsequent U.S. distribution is also planned.)

Welnowski paired his Viper with a Grass Valley Venom FlashPak digital recorder, directly attached to the camera, and used a lens package that included Zeiss DigiPrime and 6-24mm DigiZoom film-style lenses, as well as a Canon Cine Zoom telephoto lens.

"The Viper/Venom combination allowed us to move freely among glaciers, ice-covered mountains and inside caves--where the daytime temperature was often at or below 10 degrees Fahrenheit, with 50 mph winds. A special canvas bag and an ARRI rain deflector were fitted around the Viper to protect it against the elements, which also included sleet, horizontal rain and blizzard conditions." The Viper camera, Welnowski says, "held up to the harsh conditions with no problems."

"I believe this is one of the first movies shot with an electronic camera and no cables, just like a film camera," says Welnowski, who served as technical director as well as designer of the on-site workflow. "It gave me so much freedom, which I have never had with an electronic camera system before. Under these harsh



conditions, the equipment performed beautifully. I had brought a second Viper with me but never used it."

By his own estimation, Welnowski has shot more productions with the Viper than anyone in the industry. In addition to *No Network*, he's also shot 56 episodes for Nick Jr. TV's *LazyTown*, which was also shot in Iceland, over a two-year period. He experienced no system failures when shooting in uncompressed 4:4:4 Film Stream (2.37:1) mode in the extreme heat of Utah and Death Valley, Nevada. And he recently used Viper and a DVS Clipster recorder to shoot three episodes of a National Geographic limited series called *Day Under Fire*. The Vietnam episode will air on Nov. 20 on National Geographic Channel; the two other episodes will debut next year.

"The Viper camera's FilmStream mode provides unbelievable low-light sensitivity, a 3D look and vibrant colors, especially in low light," he says, adding that he was able to use very few lighting fixtures and sometimes none at all--even when shooting two hours after sunset, as he often did.

Director Ari Kristinsson was also impressed with how the Viper and Venom held up against the elements. He had seen three other brands of cameras fail on him during previous Icelandic shoots.

The Venom recorder allowed Welnowski and his crew to work continuously, where film magazines would have had to be swapped out constantly. After each day's shoot, the uncompressed 4:4:4 files on the Venom were offloaded onto Clipster and backed up to a Fibre Channel 4TB RAID as well as to SCSI Cine-Reels.

For on-location review, Welnowski says they used Clipster and a Cine-tal monitor inside a Mercedes SUV. This system allowed them to evaluate images on location and see how the final might look in theaters. He was also able to load frames into a MacBook Pro, grade them immediately with Iridas SpeedGrade OnSet and save the desired LUTs.

After two or three days, the Cine-Reels were flown from the northern part of Iceland (West Fjords, located about 160 miles from Greenland), where most of the shooting took place, to Welnowski's postproduction studio. After securely uploading the files to a server, he would erase the Fiber RAID array and Clipster that were on location.

No Network was one of the first features shot entirely without cables using the Viper-Venom workflow. Welnowski says the producers loved the results so much that all subsequent studio shots were acquired in the same way. "This camera, in the right hands, is capable of great things," adds Welnowski.

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