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The Secret's Out...

Adobe Production Studio Comes to the Mac

Adobe's Simon Hayhurst, Director of Product Management for Dynamic Media, takes us inside the Production Studio's journey across platforms

How much of it? Premiere Pro? Encore DVD? Yes, ALL of it!

Just a few days into the New Year and we may already have the biggest story of the year. Why? With its next release in June 2007, the Adobe Production Studio will run on Macs with Intel CPUs.

The initial spotlight is on Premiere Pro and Encore DVD, neither before released on Mac. Also drawing attention is Soundbooth, a new audio software tool now in public beta at the Adobe Labs website. But it doesn't stop there...

Adobe is also showing the rest of the Production Studio on Mactel: After Effects, Photoshop, Illustrator and Flash.

So it turns out that Adobe wasn't pushed off the Mac by Apple. They also didn't jump. Rather than hitting "Stop," Adobe simply pressed the "Pause" button.

"When we chose to take Premiere off the Mac, it was because Premiere needed a ground-up rewrite," says Simon Hayhurst, director of Product Management for Adobe Dynamic Media. "When Apple announced their intention to move to Intel as their core CPU set, we saw the opportunity to accelerate our plans to return to the Mac."

I asked Simon why Adobe didn't

say Premiere would be back when it left in 2003, or any time since.

There was no amount of future promising that would have made people any less unhappy, he said. Giving a specific timeframe would not have helped either. The target was too far away to be predictable for Adobe or comforting to customers.

So Adobe stayed quiet and stayed the course.

WHISPER SUITE

They did try giving us hints and in retrospect, they were there.

"I'll tell you something that surprised me," Simon says. "We said, we're going to target this announcement for MacWorld. Even though we aren't shipping until June, it'll give people time to really absorb the news. But what can we do to build the pre-buzz? Let's bring Soundbooth out even earlier just to tease the market.

"When we rolled it out as Windows and Mactel, I was sure we were going to see a lot of buzz -- 'ooh, does this mean they're going to do more on Mactel?' But it never happened.

"You know, every time we heard somebody say that we were leaving

the Mac, we said the Mac customer base is very important to us — but we understand that actions speak louder than words. We had to bide our time, knowing that we knew we weren't abandoning the Mac platform. I think now we can safely say that we aren't leaving the Mac," he laughs.

FINE TUNING

Another reason so few may have guessed at Premiere Pro on Mac was seeing what it can do on a PC. Its ferocious performance reflects OS-level integration that seemed unlikely for two platforms at once.

"One of the biggest things we've learned from our years of experience with Photoshop across multiple platforms is that, if you do it right, it's very doable," says Simon. "The quickest way to do that for Premiere Pro was to focus on just one operating system first, and in particular, one CPU set, because every good NLE has a lot of CPU-tuned code."

CPU-specific tuning is why the new Studio is Intel-only for Mac. "It would probably have taken another year or more to get the tuning necessary to work on PowerPC."

Every good NLE also has a lot of GPU tuned code. Premiere Pro uses the OpenGL built into video cards (Graphics Processing Unit) to accelerate the display of such things as 3D effects. It also uses the GPU to accelerate the rendering of final output.

Speaking of cards, I asked Simon if third-party I/O will be part of the Mac Premiere Pro experience. He acknowledges that Adobe is working with current Windows partners like AJA and Blackmagic to make it happen.

Of course, much of Adobe's work so far has been with Apple itself, on integration and optimizations to ensure that Mac users get the kinds of performance that they've seen with Premiere Pro on Windows. "In fact," says Simon, "it's only with Mac OS 10.5 that we start to see the performance we need."

COMPELLING EFFICIENCIES

Now that everyone has one, it's easy to forget that Adobe invented

the integrated video software suite, and named it "Studio." I have good reasons to believe that the adoption of the Studio concept *and name* by others was an explicit bid to repeat Adobe's success. Nice try, kids.

Adobe beats their combined sales by offering what they only claim to: best-of-class software, truly integrated. Only Adobe gets even the basics right: a unified interface across the suite.

"Think about what's in the video bundles today — Photoshop, Illustrator, After Effects and Flash — and what it takes to get those four products tightly integrated. Alongside them, you have Premiere Pro, Encore and now Soundbooth — that's some power," Simon laughs. "People may not do everything in the Production Studio, but they'll be jumping in and out of it because it's a very efficient way to live.

"Even if somebody doesn't start using one of the products at first, they wind up doing so because of how things progress.

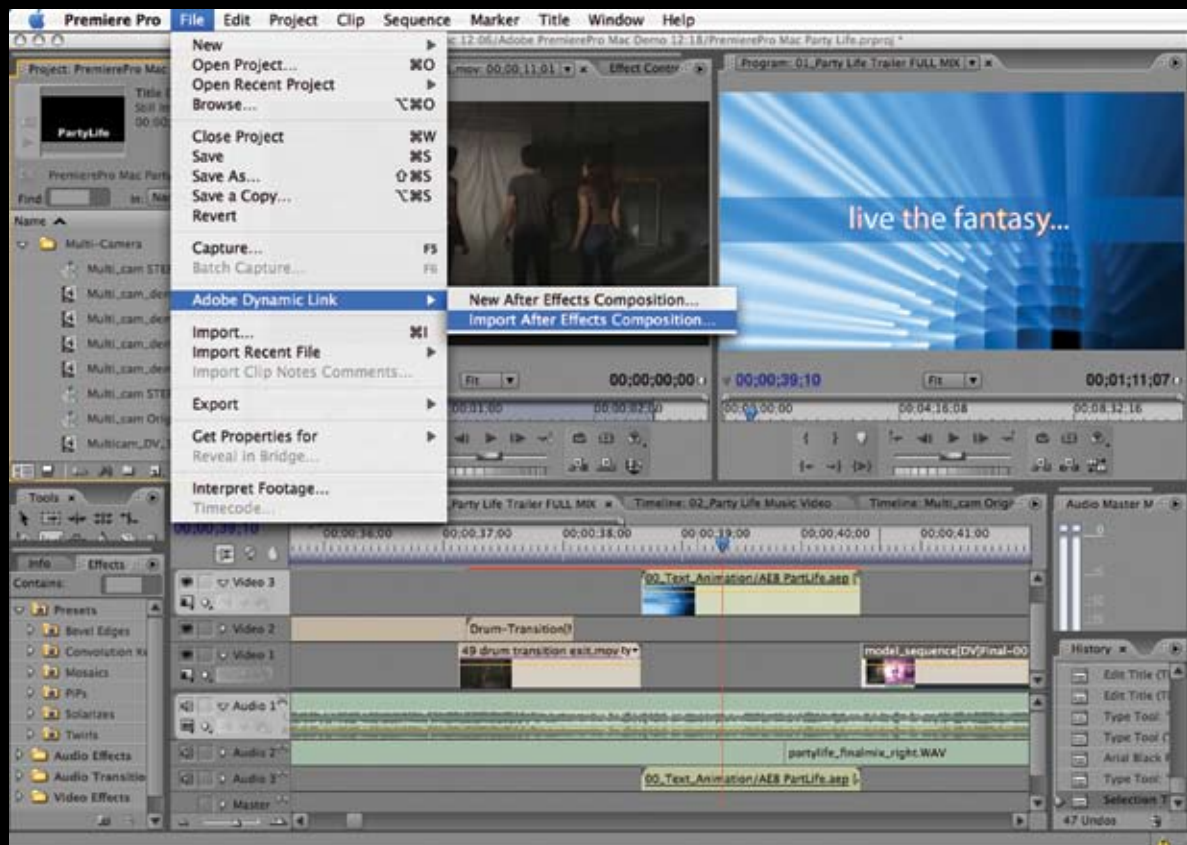
"I'll give you an example. Every frame of Superman Returns was touched by Premiere Pro. They used Premiere Pro for ingest and fast color correction. It was their natural choice because any time they needed to do something more sophisticated in After Effects, they could do that without having to re-render."

Although the Superman team used Avid Interplay for editing and asset management, they "used Premiere for all of the start and a lot of the finish because it has that nice, neat coupling with applications they were already using."

The Dynamic Link between After Effects and Premiere Pro — using After Effects compositions in Premiere Pro, where they update when changes are made in After Effects — is indeed one of the most impressive parts of the package.

There are other useful integrations. Changes to sources from Photoshop automatically update the DVD menus in Encore.

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Adobe Premiere Pro with Dynamic Link operating on an Intel Mac.

