

Case Study

At Ascent Media, Sunset Digital & HTV, Ukon™ is a Workhorse for Flexible Format Conversion



Snell's Ukon is the preferred format conversion choice for the world's most demanding media professionals.

The Customers

Ascent Media Group, based in Santa Monica, California, provides creative and technical media services to the world's major entertainment companies. Through more than 70 facilities in the regions of Southern California, New York, London and Singapore and at locations throughout the world, Ascent Media serves major motion picture studios, independent producers, broadcast networks, cable channels, advertising agencies and other companies that produce, own and/or distribute entertainment, news, sports, corporate, educational, industrial and advertising content.

Sunset Digital, in Glendale, California, is renowned for delivering high-end creative and technical film and video postproduction services in a variety of media and all types of data, to the Hollywood entertainment industry.

Active in both feature film and television services, Sunset Digital can handle virtually any job. Its vast range of standard and high definition services work at any picture rate: 24, 25, 30, 50, or 60 fps-or any scanning format- 1080i/1080p or 720p.

HTV (High Technology Video) of Los Angeles is a leader in the business of high-definition telecine mastering and artifact free standards conversion. The company's predominant focus is mastering feature films and television shows for domestic and international distribution. HTV also performs electronic restoration of images, as well as various types of duplication and audio work. It is the only place in the world that can transfer 70mm and 65/70mm in real time, in both high definition and standard definition. Its clients include major studios and many independent production companies

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The Challenge

To routinely provide high-quality, no compromise video format conversion—whether in editing suites, telecine or DVD production—to the world's most discriminating media clients.

The Snell Solution

Ascent Media, Sunset Digital and HTV each chose Snell's Ukon universal conversion platform as its preferred choice for the best available format conversion.

Ukon provides up conversion, down conversion, and cross-conversion either singly or in any combination. Designed to handle different frame rates, image sizes, and aspect ratios, the system includes features such as tilt, pan and zoom, timecode conversion with precise frame mapping, comprehensive audio handling, and 3:2 cadence detection and repair. Unlike any other format conversion system, Ukon executes all these functions at the same time, in a single pass. Frequently used conversions can be programmed for reuse at the touch of a button.

Capable of handling any kind of HD-to-HD, SD to-HD, or HD-to-SD conversion, its flexibility and efficiency make Ukon a natural choice as the image processor for virtual telecine applications. Because it performs its functions in real time, the system can be used to convert from telecine or tape or disk in the time it takes for dubbing. Ukon also features real-time aspect ratio conversion as part of this process so that SD copies created from an HD master telecine can be panned, scanned, zoomed, and tilted to suit.

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Ukon drew similar praise from Ascent Media. "We chose the Ukon because it gave the highest quality results in all the tests we did with clients," said Kevin Sanders, Ascent Media's vice president of engineering. "We can see no discernable difference between the transform engine used in the conventional telecine and the transform engine in the Ukon. Ukon by itself is a great product, and in virtual telecine, it becomes a key part of an amazing system designed by Ascent Media to reduce time-to-market and ensure uniformity and the highest quality of deliverables worldwide."

The Results

Not only has Ukon proven itself with the world's toughest media clients, but its user-friendly design has made it a joy to use. Ukon integrates easily with post-production systems to provide editors, colorists, and other operators with control through familiar interfaces. Said Jim Hardy, CEO of HTV, Inc., "It has been very advantageous for us to integrate the Ukon into our workflow. The great thing about Ukon is that you can work with everything in real time. There is no rendering or low-res proxies, just the material in its native resolution. In the end, our clients just want to know that we can get the job done—and done right—by a certain date. Using the Ukon has made a big difference in being able to deliver this certainty to our clients."