

Taipei Postproduction Corp.

Taipei, Taiwan
(WWW.TPE-PP.COM.TW)

BULKY Animation Studio

Taipei, Taiwan
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Autodesk® Lustre® software
Autodesk® Maya® software
Autodesk® 3ds Max® software

Using Autodesk Lustre to accurately adjust color and fix light changes not only simplifies the filming process, but accurate grading makes for stunning visual effects.

—Chu Szu-yi
Senior Lustre Colorist
Taipei Postproduction Corp.

The Inside Story of Cape No. 7.

Seven love letters cross time and space and episodes in the lives of people in Hengchun township come together to create a landmark in Taiwan film history.



Images courtesy of BULKY Animation Studio and ARS Film Production.

The moving and dramatic experiences of people in Hengchun Township, Taiwan blend together with seven timeless love letters to create Cape No. 7, a dramatic love story that has already emerged as the biggest blockbuster in Taiwanese film history and an inspiration to future generations of filmmakers. The team behind that success includes Director Wei Te-sheng, the Taipei Postproduction Corp., and BULKY Animation Studio.

Cape No. 7 is a story of music, love, and dreams in a time of great trial. In addition to great acting performances, the film benefits from precise color grading and the thoughtful creation of some spectacular visual effects.

The Soul of the Cape: The Art of Color Grading

It was 2007 when Taipei Postproduction made significant advances over traditional color grading processes by adopting Autodesk® Lustre® digital color grading software.

“Autodesk Lustre software has the speed, convenience, and flexibility to better meet the typical requirements of the colorist,” explains Chu Szu-yi, Senior Lustre colorist, Taipei Postproduction. “Not only is the system a huge improvement over traditional color grading, it also reduces pre-production costs and time spent in actual shooting. Lustre software’s precision helps us meet and exceed customer expectations with lighting enhancements that improve the overall look, while saving money and time. There is more time for creativity.”

Chu Szu-yi spent approximately a month color grading Cape No. 7. One scene reveals several characters in conversation during a night scene. Due to a variety of factors, however, the scene had to be shot at midday. Autodesk Lustre software’s flexibility, and real time comparisons of scenes kept the color grading process smooth as glass. The artists used automatic area tracking to quickly track elements in the scenes, and automatically generate animation masks, freeing them from several complex tasks.

True Colors

Another scene involved several overexposed models on a beach. If the models could not be successfully adjusted, they would have to be reshot. Fortunately, Autodesk® Lustre® offers high grading tolerance, enabling realistic lighting and color correction to be performed.

Still another pivotal scene involved a 3D boat created using Autodesk® Maya® software that needed to be blended into a live action scene. The Mask feature in Lustre was used to quickly adjust color and animation for a seamless scene in a fraction of the time it might have taken. The colorist was also able to test various color grading techniques in order to combine and perfect scenes.

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The Scene Production of Taka-Sago Maru

A compelling narrative drives Cape No.7 across time and through space, at one point revealing a sailor named Taka-Sago Maru viewing a retreating Japanese army. Director Wei Te-sheng used compelling animated simulations and effects to recreate the melancholic scene. At the start of shooting, Te-Shang awarded the 3D animation challenge to the talented artists at BULKY Animation Studio.

According to Johnny Lin, CEO of BULKY Animation Studio, the visual effects team spent two busy years on the project, which precisely depicts the war-torn year of 1945. Actual filming was accomplished in an old beer factory in Taichung, and involved hundreds of extras recreating the Japanese pullout.

“Computer animation makes for limitless creativity and imagination,” says Lin. “Using Autodesk Maya made it possible to create accurate and touching scenes on Cape No. 7 which would not have been possible otherwise. For example, the film’s opening scene required that we shoot a small model ship sailing in Houbi Lake. Natural challenges including water ripples and winds helped us realize that CG would be better for this scene. We used Maya nParticles together with the Autodesk® 3ds Max® software plug-in to create strikingly realistic scenes, and used Maya Fluid Effects to simulate the smog rising from the boat’s chimney as well as the sunset.”

The BULKY team created another scene using several models created with Autodesk Maya software’s polygon modeling capabilities to reproduce a farewell between two of the main characters:

“We shot the wharf at the Taichung beer factory, but the interior scenes on the boat were shot in the studio,” explains Lin. “With Autodesk technology we were able to combine the scenes into a fully accurate and realistic vision of 1945. We used ray tracing and animations created in Maya to replicate steel ropes on the ship, and we implemented flags flying using Maya nCloth. I firmly believe that Autodesk Maya was necessary for our production to succeed. It is user-friendly, flexible, and feature rich.”



Images courtesy of BULKY Animation Studio and ARS Film Production.

Another scene required that a postman known as Uncle Mao ride a bike while delivering mail. The shot was repaired using Autodesk technology:

“Uncle Mao is wearing a white shirt, which was not consistent with other scenes,” says Lin. “Using Maya, we were able to change his shirt. This sounds like a small thing, but it required extensive shooting and 3D modeling to perfect that 30 second scene. We were also able to simulate scenes involving heavy rain, which made things more convenient and pleasant for the production.”

In the end, the project benefited from extensive use of a powerful combination of Autodesk Lustre, Autodesk 3ds Max and Autodesk Maya. Autodesk products helped Taipei Postproduction and BULKY Animation to precisely complete scenes, polish storylines, and make better movies.

Taipei Postproduction used Autodesk Lustre for color grading on more than 10 films, including Cape No. 7. We are not just fulfilling the requirements of our customers, but also setting the standard for digital intermediate.

—Rex Chang
Senior Manager
Taipei Postproduction Corp.