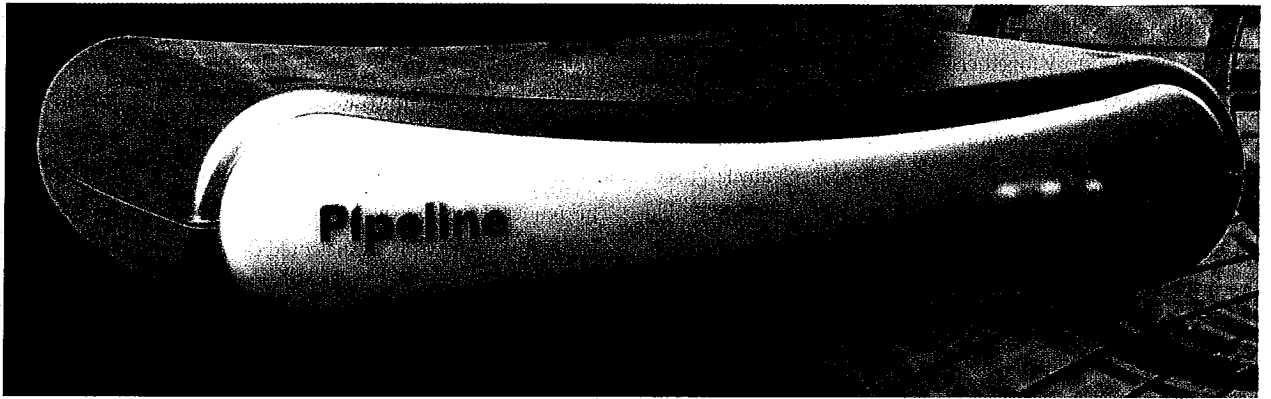


TELESTREAM PIPELINE ENCODER

I/O ON THE NETWORK



Telestream has started to ship its much-anticipated Pipeline encoder and capturing system for QuickTime and Final Cut Pro, just in time for the holidays. You're probably wondering why the video world needs another capture device in a space already occupied by several established manufacturers. That concern might be valid if Pipeline were simply a capture card, but it's important to understand how it differs.

Telestream has earned a reputation as an encoding company, first with FlipFactory and more recently with its Flip4Mac software, which enables Windows Media encoding on the Mac. Plus, they've actively developed the Episode series of products, a comprehensive encoding suite based on the 2006 acquisition of Popwire's Compression Master technology. Pipeline becomes another unit in this family of products. Other competing capture systems connect to the computer via a PCIe card or FireWire, but Pipeline uses Ethernet and standard IP addressing. Since it connects at 10/100-T rates, as well as Gig-E, Pipeline works with both older and newer Macs and is a network-aware

device. In short, having the Pipeline unit attached to one workstation means that any other Mac on this same LAN is able to access Pipeline and ingest or output to tape. Likewise, if you have several Pipeline units on the same LAN, you have a choice of which to use.

The Telestream Pipeline encoder is a standard-definition, digital-only device connected to its video source via SDI. At a cost of \$1,950, it's a bit more expensive than AJA's Io LD, the closest competitor. Of course, Io LD is intended for use by a single workstation, whereas Pipeline can be accessed by any unit on the network. Another key difference is that Pipeline uses built-in encoding controlled by a DSP. This is software-upgradeable, so more codecs can be added in the future. Unlike capture devices that pass the ingested signal as uncompressed video or a limited-use compression format like DNxHD, ProRes or even DVCPRO HD, current Pipelines encode in DV/DVCPRO25, IMX 30/40/50 or 50Mb/s I-frame MPEG-2. Telestream is targeting broadcast, archiving and server applications. The first two format choices (DV and IMX) are typical for acquisition,

news and post and are compatible with Apple Final Cut Pro. The 50Mb/s MPEG-2 format is designed to be compatible with Telestream's FlipFactory and is considered to be of comparable quality to Digital Betacam. It's a signal format many broadcasters use for their internal server and archiving infrastructures.

Running the Pipeline installer adds the necessary Final Cut Pro plug-in to drive the encoder. Plug Pipeline into the Mac's Ethernet port and then simply cable up the SDI connections and an RS-422 VTR remote to the appropriate video source. That's all there is to it.

Since Pipeline isn't a traditional FCP capture device, you access it through the File > Import submenu. Clicking on the Pipeline option brings up a dialog box to acquire the device (already auto-sensed over the network by the Mac) and next a log-and-transfer window similar to the one familiar to P2 users. That's where you control the deck, mark in and out times and capture.

The last (and additional step) is to import the captured clips, which adds them to the FCP project browser as master clips. When you are running Pipeline

as an FCP plug-in, only the DV/DVCPRO and IMX formats are currently available. When you are going back out to tape, instead of using Final Cut's Edit-to-Tape or Print-to-Tape routines, you again acquire Pipeline through the File > Export submenu. The process then follows essentially the same steps as the import routine. Since the device functions through this Import/Export workflow, you cannot use Pipeline as an active monitoring system while you are editing. There's somewhat of a delay, so even if you could do this, the delay would be too annoying. On the other hand, if you wanted to send your rough cut out as a preview to someone else in the building connected on the same LAN, it would simply be a matter of accessing the correct Pipeline's IP address and exporting your timeline as video over SDI.

The Pipeline encoder isn't just tied to

Apple Final Cut Pro; it can also be used as a standalone device. Other Telestream applications are still in beta testing, but control software will be available for Pipeline. A separate capture and output application (similar to the FCP import module) can be run on any Mac. For example, a simple Mac could be used by an assistant editor or a library archivist to ingest clips without the need and cost of installing the full Final Cut Studio package. Telestream plans to make it possible to automatically schedule such capture functions. For a broadcaster, this means that if you have a certain program feed that needs to be captured at 3 a.m. every day, that task can be automated using Telestream software and the Pipeline encoder.

In tandem with Final Cut Pro, Pipeline was pretty much a set-it-and-forget-it device; however, part of

Telestream's Pipeline strategy is to augment other products, like Episode. This is an area that I hope will see more development. For instance, captured video is now saved to your drives as a QuickTime file in either the DV or IMX codec. If your intent is DVD authoring or encoding for the Web, then you'll still have to encode that file into Long GOP MPEG-2 (for DVD), H.264 or other compression formats. Experienced DVD pros prefer hardware encoding, so it would be nice in the future for Telestream to offer a software upgrade that expands the range of codecs, like those already available in Episode. Real-time hardware encoding of high-quality, DVD-compliant MPEG-2 files or H.264 for the Web would really set Pipeline apart from the pack. For now, Pipeline is an elegant, portable I/O solution for editors and broadcasters alike.

POST

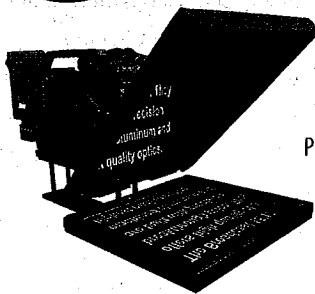
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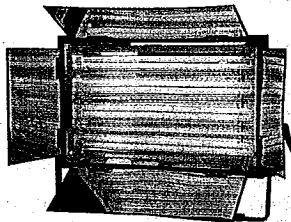
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