

Day for Night with the Colorist Toolbox

Although the colorist is often required to create fresh new looks, each must also be adept at a number of frequently requested styles, such as black and white, sepia tone, bleach reduction and an old favorite "Bladerunner". For these the challenge is to produce a media cliché in a unique way. Usually the reason for using a cliché is to communicate a universally understood message. For example sepia tone is associated with the past. Another good example is "day for night" also known as "American night". For a variety of reasons it is sometimes necessary to shoot a night scene during the day. Audiences everywhere recognize dark blue scenes as night time.

The colorist toolbox presents the colorist with some new tools for changing day into night. I already have a powergrade collection of night effects that is available from the <http://www.finalcolor.com/> website. However, these use multiple channels and defocus, which is an extravagant use of processing!

I started by applying the fog filter to the whole image. I achieved a flat blue haze by setting Lum to 0, Hue to 90 and Sat to 20. The Fogginess value defines just how hazy and I used level 46 in my example

Next step was to add back some contrast and darken the image, which I did with the master secondaries of the Toolbox outside color corrector and the Defocus outside primaries.



Regular "Day" Grade



Colorist Toolbox Fog Filter



Night Grade

The result is a credible night effect, but rather dark and dull, so I add back the highlights with a Toolbox defocused kilovector. For good measure I use a second Toolbox vector to isolate and crush the blacks. The result is weakened because of the blue haze from the fog filter is applied after the kilovector. Using a third Toolbox kilovector as the Toolbox effect region I can exclude extreme blacks and whites, reducing the blue in these regions. This is my PowerGrade for Day for Night.



Night Grade with Keyed Shadow and Highlights

However in the example the sky is not quite right, and the gentleman is silhouetted. So the finishing touches in this scene are to add a graduated effect to the sky, and a mask over the man to retain some detail that is otherwise lost in the shadows.



Night Grade with Graduated Sky and Detail Mask

One of the advantages of doing this in the Toolbox is the added flexibility. It was easy to produce a lighter variation by increasing the Lum value in the fog filter.



Lighter Variation

I then tried a more colorful version that would be closer to dusk than midnight, by reducing the saturation value in the fog filter.



Dusk version

I added these to my "Night" PowerGrade library, for use on other jobs. There are plenty of other ways to get day for night, but having grades that only use the Toolbox is especially useful if other parts of the system are already in use.

Happy Coloring!

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