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Camera rolling

by Vijaya Cherian on Sep 24, 2008

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Digital Studio visits various locations with the Icon Art Productions team, the first company in the UAE to purchase the SI-2 K digital cinema camera, and snaps them in action.



Zakir Hussain (extreme right) with his team at Icon Art Productions.

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While the Red One camera does have its fan following and a few among them are in the Middle East, those who missed the boat and could not partake of what the camera has to offer, now have an alternative that is more easily available and supported locally.

This is one of the prime reasons why the director of Icon Art Productions, Zakir Hussain, a well-known IT consultant with a passion for tango and cinematography, finally decided to take the plunge into production with the SI-2K.

Hussain already has a thriving IT business in Dubai. However, these days, you are more likely to see him on location in the sweltering heat directing or filming corporate films or music videos than donning a tie and doing IT business deals.

"I have been in IT for 12 years but on the side, I have also been pursuing two of my other loves - tango and filming. I used to do the video shoots for some of our events and also went for some of the workshops at the Manhattan Film Academy. At some point, I realised that I wanted to pursue my dreams in TV production. That's how I started this production house."

Hussain's first choice was an HD cam but decided against buying a format whose look had already become commonplace in the industry. Instead, his research took him along a new road, where he learnt about the Red One, the SI-2K and the Arri D-21.

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"The Red was not available so I guess I missed the boat there," says Hussain. "The D-21 was way beyond my budget so it was crossed off instantly. The SI-2K was ideal for my needs and fit my budget. I made up my mind at a training workshop conducted by Advanced Media Trading in Dubai for those who wanted to know more about this camera. Given that I'm pretty new to the production business and would require more support than seasoned filmmakers, the SI-2K seemed to be my best bet."

Since the camera was purchased, Icon Art Productions has done several shoots including three music videos, a private video on tango as well as corporate videos for Swiss Perfumes and Al Zahra Hospital in Dubai.

"I've already recovered 25% of what I spent on the camera," claims Hussain. "My clients loved the footage and what you can do with the raw material at the editing stage is fantastic. I was previously looking at the F900 but realised that it is tape driven and grabbing footage takes the most amount of time. Here, you just shoot, plug the camera into your laptop and the footage is in. You also get a close-to-film look with this camera," claims Hussain.

The Silicon Imaging SI-2K is capable of capturing full-resolution, 2K and 1920 x 1080 progressive-scan 12-bit CineForm RAW images for use in both digital cinema projection and HD television.

It uses SI's proprietary 48-bit digital processing algorithms to perform adaptive, pixel-by-pixel black calibration and colour image enhancement. A single, large 16:9 format 2/3" CMOS sensor enables the use of 16mm film-style lenses.

Hussain has invested in Arri lights and begun to add more accessories to his camera kit in order to have a full-fledged solution that can also be rented out.

"Editing has been easy as well. We recorded onto a hard disc, transferred everything to our laptop, backed up the footage and edited on Adobe Premiere. Backing up your footage is crucial," he reiterates.

Hussain is so happy with the camera he claims he will invest in two more of the same if he plans to do a feature film. "I like the look and feel of the images, and am confident that I'll be able to use this to produce a feature-length movie at some point."

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