

·|· Color as Through-Line ·|·

At press time, *Star Trek Beyond* was hurtling toward a deadline of its own, and colorist Tom Reiser of Deluxe's EFilm had just launched full-bore into the project's digital intermediate. Since many of the visual effects were still in the works, Reiser was starting out by color-grading dramatic sequences. He wasn't particularly worried about the inevitable scramble he would experience alongside director Justin Lin and cinematographer Stephen F. Windon, ASC, ACS, because Reiser had already participated in establishing the foundation for the movie's color palette up front. Working closely with EFilm's color-science department over the years, Reiser has developed many basic show LUTs, as he did here on *Beyond*. Dailies colorist John Hart of Deluxe's EC3 dailies department had in fact used the look throughout production, and that same LUT was being employed as the foundation of the DI process.

"The LUT was developed based on Stephen Windon's style," says Reiser, speaking from years of experience working alongside Windon on *Fast and Furious* movies. "Knowing he is a film guy, we wanted to keep that 'film' DNA — even though this movie was shot with the [Arri Alexa XT]. I describe the LUT as almost like film, but pushed a little, with more colors to choose from and stronger contrast. Having that LUT already developed helps a lot going into the DI."

Windon adds, "My main goal for color timing in general is to smooth out certain production shots that came from different environments and different countries, making it all gel — and then paying a lot of attention to detail, [especially on this movie] with all the action, visual effects and interactive light. We might be making a window or hallway darker, adjusting color temperature a little bit here or there — [with] material



coming together that was shot on different days, where lights might have been dimmed slightly differently. We have to spend a lot of time on those little things."

Reiser is performing the color grade with FilmLight's Baselight version 4.4. Because Windon had already begun shooting *Fast 8* in Atlanta when the DI commenced, the cinematographer and colorist have opted to use Deluxe's remote collaboration system. Windon is working from Deluxe's Atlanta facility on the weekends, viewing material streamed to him in real time and conferencing with Reiser and Lin to give notes and comments. Baselight is employed on this production by EFilm conform editor Amy Pawlowski as well.

According to Reiser, another goal of the final grade is to maintain a connectivity to the two earlier *Star Trek* movies directed by J.J. Abrams and shot by Dan Mindel, ASC, BSC — and colored at Deluxe's Company 3 by ASC associate Stefan Sonnenfeld — even though *Beyond's* overall visual style is different. "The challenge is to [create] a naturalistic feeling of grain," he offers. "If you imagine *Star Trek* fans watching all three movies in a row, you don't want them to feel radically different. So I expect we'll be adding grain to lend the whole movie a more organic feel. I don't add grain to a lot of movies I [grade] that are set in modern day, but I think

that organic feeling is really important to Justin — and I now have grain tools that are really nice and precise for doing it a number of different ways. We can sometimes composite grain and do generated grain; there are a few plug-ins out there that are really great."

Another subtle element of the process will involve ensuring the color accuracy of the famous Starfleet uniforms. "We liked [the color schemes] of the first

two movies," Reiser says, "and I noticed from watching them that a lot of it came out of the production design and costumes. The fans really know those tones — they know exactly what color the shirts should be. So I expect on a final pass, I'll be doing plenty of windows to make sure we have just the right blue and just the right red. That can actually be a big challenge in timing a movie like this — to get that stuff consistent throughout — because they shot from so many different angles, with different light, and with so much action going on."

Reiser knew that he would face a major grading challenge with a sequence featuring a swarm of ships attacking the *Enterprise*, and the corresponding red-alert emergency-light effect that was achieved on-set by way of complex LED techniques. He notes that difficulties arise because such sequences involve "so much atmosphere, and atmosphere doesn't behave. Sometimes you get a lot of atmosphere and sometimes you get none. When they go to red alert, the lights drop and the ship is damaged. I'm sure I'll be doing some keys to match practicals on cuts for that sequence, and creating plenty of windows to help out the atmosphere, [adding] contrast here and there."

—Michael Goldman