

Alter Ego leads the way in film grading and compositing in the high-end Canadian commercial marketplace

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Baselight and Baselight for NUKE team up for an innovative and intense spot for Cycling Canada.

Alter Ego, Canada's premier colour and VFX post-production facility for film and TV, teamed up with Cycling Canada, Innocean and director Mark Zibert to create a breathtaking display of cycling.

The 60-second spot for Cycling Canada features a variety of bicycles speeding around in a number of different environments: mountains, streets, dirt roads, velodromes. Some bikes are alone and some are in large groups. Some are travelling extremely fast. There's just one catch - none of the bikes have riders.



The goal is to inspire Canadians to get active, and the spot serves up a succinct rallying cry to potential riders: 'Hop On.'

The entire VFX team at Alter Ego was tasked with bringing these 'rider-less' bikes to life. They used several approaches, from creating and animating CG bikes, to digitally removing stunt-riders and creating masses of bikes using the latest crowd simulation technology. All of these elements were integrated with beautifully captured locations across Canada.

For this project the talented artists at Alter Ego created a new VFX-Colour EXR Linear workflow, which enabled the CG, compositing and colour departments all to work on the same source file with full creative and technical control, while reducing the need for multiple renders. Senior colourist, Wade Odium, completed the grade using Baselight. The Baselight Grade (BLG) files were then loaded into Baselight for NUKE so the compositors could work the CG and compositing to the grades as they evolved. Wade could also use some of the CG passes and mattes to help him craft the grade with so much more precision.

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"The BLG workflow between Baselight for NUKE, NUKE and Baselight meant we didn't have to render every time we made a change, and this really reduced the amount of data we were creating," said Andres Kirejew, VFX supervisor at Alter Ego. "It was a full EXR linear workflow end-to-end. We comped in NUKE Studio and balanced shots to the ungraded flat plate, but we always loaded the BLGs for client-attended reviews or postings without having to go into the colour suite every time.

"We used a lot of external passes, skies and flares directly within Baselight. It really becomes indispensable because of its fast real-time iterative environment - as opposed to a fully comp environment, in which we tweak, render, wait, tweak,

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render, wait! All in all, the film had 50 shots, including 25 CG shots, four of which used Golaem, and 18 paint/roto shots.”



Odlum commented: “The exciting part for me was being able to create a filmic look using the tools that Baselight has as well as all of the elements from VFX. We used matte shapes for all the different components of the bike - for the wheels, the frame, etc. - so it made it really easy to correct each part of the bike separately and get the specific look we were after.”



Director Zibert was impressed by the flexibility they got from the workflow. “We were actually grading footage before we even started editing - developing looks and exploring where they could go. Then we would change a few things, do a bit more work on CG and bring back the modified shots into the grading suite. Having the option to quickly add high quality,

complex colour correction to the shots definitely gave us much more flexibility than typical workflows.”

From the majestic mountains in British Columbia to the newest velodrome in North America, Alter Ego helped to envisage cycling in its most epic form. ‘Hop on’ and enjoy the ride.



How they did it:

<https://vimeo.com/124837392>



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