

SEARCH

- ABOUT US
- THE CREATIVE I
- EVENTS
- COMMUNITY
- KNOWLEDGE
- CONTACT US
- MEDIA KIT

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR
e M a g

Introduction to Liquids!

Part-I
By Neil Sadwelkar

From the title it may seem that Creative-i has diversified into fluid dynamics. No, not yet. The Liquid being referred to here is a series of desktop video editing systems made by Pinnacle Systems. And this article is just an introduction to this series of systems. A sequel to this will do a hands-on review of one of this family - Liquid Edition Pro.

To video professionals, Pinnacle is not a new name. They make the Targa 3000 card that goes inside many an edit 6 system. The Targa 3000 is a worthy successor to the Targa 2000 that went inside all Avid ABVB Media Composers systems. Even the Cinéwave card that sits inside many a Final Cut Pro system is made by Pinnacle.

Pinnacle also makes video editing systems at the consumer and prosumer level and this is where they are very strong in India. Yet, as far as mainstream editing of TV shows, ad films, documentaries etc. in India are concerned, a sentence that goes... "I edit on a ___" ... doesn't usually end with the word Pinnacle maybe 9 out of 10 times...yet.

Now, with the Liquid series of machines, Pinnacle hopes to achieve just that, here in India. These systems may turn out to be a unified competitor to Avid XPress, Media Composer and Apple Final Cut Pro machines. And there is every chance that if they do things right, they will at least wipe out the combined competition [to Avid and Apple] in the form of the Edit6, Velocity, Premiere, Vegas and such fringe players. Again all this pertains to India. Pinnacle is rather strong in Germany, France, Australia etc.

We got a rather close look at one such Liquid system - Liquid Chrome - over a few days when we had one system as a demo unit for the ongoing Digital Media Concepts [DMC] Workshop series organized by misenscene.net and sponsored by Pinnacle and Seagate. The DMC workshops were held at Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune and Hyderabad. More on DMC later. Back to Liquids.

This new Liquid series of machines consists of...



Liquid Edition Pro, the entry-level offering - a "Professional DV editor" consisting of an NLE software - Liquid Edition - and an AGP card with a break-out box which has composite, S-video in and out, stereo audio in and out, and FireWire.

Liquid Edition Pro was introduced in Sept 2003 and it replaced Pinnacle Edition and Liquid Purple. Many moons ago Pinnacle acquired Fast, a German video hardware company. After the acquisition, they took the FastStudio editing software, and re-launched it as Edition.DV. They then announced an end to all future support for Adobe Premiere Pro on all of the Pinnacle products.

Meaning no more Pinnacle drivers for DV500, Pro-ONE etc on Premiere. And now on, Liquid would be the common software for all their PC-based editing systems.

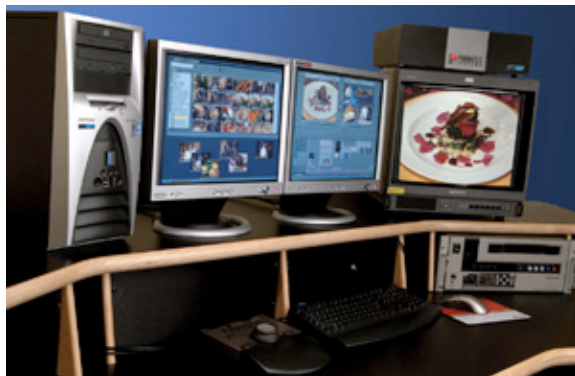


Liquid Silver is a "Professional MPEG Post Editor" which uses the same software as Liquid Edition and has SDI and S-video standard with YUV optional. This is an edit system for working with MPEG2 streams.





Next up is Liquid Chrome - again the same Liquid software but a Targa 3000 card for IO and processing and has nearly any in and out you can name. Composite, S-video, component, SDI, etc. The Targa 3000 hardware provides hardware acceleration of up to 4 streams real-time effects.



Finally the top end is the Liquid Blue system. Blue was first proposed in the late nineties by Fast. Blue uses the same Liquid software but is a multi-format system that can work with DV, compressed, uncompressed and other video types while keeping them in their native form and still run real-time. A great concept, and this is really how all NLEs ought to be. The complete Liquid family is:

	Liquid Edition	Liquid silver	Liquid chrome	Liquid blue
Overview	Professional DV Editor	Professional MPEG Post Editor	Real-time Post Production Editor	All Format Broadcast Editor
Operating System	Windows 2000 or XP*	Windows 2000	Windows 2000	Windows 2000
Video Codecs				
DV, DV-CAM	+	I/O Option	+	+
DVCPRO25	+	I/O Option	+	+
DVCPRO50	-	-	-	+
MPEG-2 I-Frame	-	+	+	+
MPEG-2 IBP	Output Only	Output and Capture	Output Only	Output and Capture
MPEG-2 IMX	-	-	-	+
Uncompressed YUV	-	+	+	+
Uncompressed RGBA	-	-	+	-
Software				
Pinnacle Liquid	+	+	+	+
Pinnacle Commotion Pro	+	+	+	+
Pinnacle Impression DVD Pro	+	+	+	+
Pinnacle				

TitleDeko Pro				
Pinnacle Hollywood FX Pro	+*	-	-	-
I/O Options				
Pro Analog Breakout Box	-	-	+	-
Pro Digital & Analog Breakout Box	-	-	+	-
Pro Digital Plus Breakout Box	-	-	+	-
Liquid Edition Pro Breakout Box	Optional	-	-	-
Liquid silver Breakout Box	-	+	-	-
Liquid blue Breakout Box	-	-	-	+
IEEE / FireWire Port	+	Optional	-	+
+= Included/Supported				
+*= Included in Liquid Edition Turnkey Solution				
*= Recommended				

And connectivity for the various systems is...

	Pro Analog	Pro Digital & Analog	Pro Digital Plus	Liquid Edition PRO	Liquid silver	Liquid blue
Video I/O						
SDTI	-	-	-	-	-	+
SDI	-	+	+	-	+	+
FireWire / 1394	-	-	-	+	Optional	+
Component YCrCb	+	+	-	-	Optional	-
Y/C (S-video)	+	+	-	+	+	Monitoring
Composite	+	+	Monitoring	+	Monitoring	Monitoring
Audio I/O						
Analog Unbalanced	2 Ch	2 Ch	Monitoring	2 Ch	-	Headphone Output
Analog Balanced	2 Ch	4 Ch	-	-	2-4* In 2-4* Out	2 Ch
AES/EBU	-	4 Ch	4 Ch	-	-	4 Ch
DV Audio	-	-	-	2 Ch	-	4 Ch
SDI embedded	-	4 Ch	4 Ch	-	4 In/2 Out	4 Ch

S/PDIF	-	2 Ch	-	-	-	-
TDIF	-	4 Ch	-	-	-	-
+= Included/Supported						
* = Optional						



Liquid Edition Pro, the system that Pinnacle loaned misenscene.net for a review, can run on any PC under Win 2000 or Win XP. It does not run on a Mac, and there appear no plans for porting to Mac either. Incidentally, Liquid Edition is the software only, while Liquid Edition Pro is the software with the capture card and break-out box. And this entire Liquid Edition Pro box is Rs 59,000.00 Just add a PC!



The minimum system to run Liquid Edition Pro is... a PC with a 1.8 GHz CPU, 256 MB RAM, Win 2k/XP, Display capable of 1024x768 at 32 bit, HDD rated at 10 MB/sec, AGP 2x or faster slot, a decent sound card.

However Pinnacle recommends Dual 1.8 GHz CPUs, 512 MB RAM, Win 2k/XP, Display capable of 1024x768 at 32 bit, HDD rated at 16 MB/sec, AGP 2x or faster slot and a decent sound card.

I tested Liquid Edition with a P4 system at 2 GHz, 512 MB RAM, Win XP, and a 80 GB Samsung HDD at 7200 rpm, and another Seagate Barracuda 40 GB 7200 rpm drive. Sound was the onboard AC97 codec sound card. I didn't go through the trouble of formatting the drives and installing the OS fresh as many reviewers do since that's not the way most users install and use new software anyway. I did check the drives for errors.

During install you need to type in the serial number that's on the CD cover. Typing it in lower case works too. Also, during the install, you need to select PAL or NTSC as the standard you wish to work with. This means if you want to do an NTSC project, you would need to re-install the software. This isn't much of a problem because, on all the Avids and FCPs I've worked on, I've actually had to do just two or three NTSC projects in the last eight years or so.

I chose to do a custom install, during which I had to name a folder for media files and renders. I chose a partition of my boot drive itself, just to see how that would work. The option of installing DirectX 9 was unchecked and I left it that way. The whole install took 9 minutes on my P4/2 GHz and the computer was restarted at the end of it. Incidentally at some points during the install the progress indicator halts and everything seems to stop. But that's normal. Just wait and it continues... I installed just the Liquid Edition software and not the AGP card that came with it. Just to see how it works. After install was complete, I fired it up.

When you start Liquid Edition, the first thing you notice is that there is no menu bar. No menus! Even the Windows task bar and start menu are replaced by a Pinnacle task bar and start menu. If your Windows task bar is not set to be "Always on Top" then it vanishes and the Liquid task bar shows in its place.

The Liquid task bar gives you access to common controls. And settings, opening, creating

projects, and of course quitting Liquid.

The editing interface is the standard source-record design with a timeline at the bottom of the screen and the Project Window at the extreme left bottom. You can also change interface views to timeline only, or Project Window only, and other setups.

Liquid Edition allows you to have more than one sequence in a project, but only one project can be open at a time. You can, however move stuff from one project to another. There can be folders inside a project to keep things organized. And racks. Think of racks as "bins" in other NLEs.

When you launch Liquid for the first time it opens with a new project with sample clips and an edited timeline replete with effects. This is really great as you can dive into an edit straight away without doing any capturing. In the timeline you need to click on a time bar at the bottom, to move to another part of the timeline. In FCP it's the bar at the top of the timeline and in Avid, you can click anywhere in the timeline.



Two other radically different and as yet unseen features are "always saved" and "render instantly". Meaning you don't need to save. Whatever you do is saved instantly. So if Liquid shuts down accidentally, you get back your whole project. And if you do any effect, render starts instantly and continues in the background so you can continue editing. You can even press a button and watch the render happen so if things aren't going right, you can stop the render. If you stop, however, the render starts all over again even if you've changed nothing. These two features are really useful.

Almost all basic editing tasks are drag and drop, so it's quite intuitive. The keyboard, button bar and project window are customizable, so you can map your Avid or FCP shortcuts and feel right at home on Liquid.

There are so many things about Liquid that deserve mention that it can be an article by itself. So I'm postponing it for reasons of space. And next week we'll dig into this new system and check out actual working.

To conclude, meaning something like "bottom line". Pinnacle's Liquid systems are a whole new and unified range of systems all dedicated to TV editing. A lot of research has gone into developing this interface and hardware. If you're a PC guy, and have been waiting with bated breath for a sensible edit system on a PC, then maybe its time to breathe now. You can do offlines with Pinnacle Edition Pro quite easily and then upgrade on a full-blown Liquid Chrome. And a set on one Liquid Chrome and even a handful of Liquid Editions, may end up being close to any other NLE makers single system in price. And think of what it can do for your productivity with so many systems.

And if only you were in the US you can even get the equivalent of about Rs 10,000 just to see a Liquid Chrome demo. To quote Pinnacle on this...

"Pinnacle is so confident that you will want to fully immerse yourself in the Liquid chrome experience that we will pay you \$200[USD]* just to get your feet wet with Liquid chrome. Effective January 1 through March 31, 2004, Pinnacle Systems will pay you \$200 to take a real look at Liquid chrome*! Call for a demonstration today. Once you have completed your Liquid chrome demonstration and place your purchase order for a Liquid chrome system, Pinnacle will pay you \$200*. If, after your Liquid chrome demonstration, you still purchase an Adrenaline system, Pinnacle will pay you \$200*. Just follow these guidelines to get your CASH!

Now how about that!

Check out the part-II of this review in the next issue of Creative i.

About Neil Sadwelkar



Neil Sadwelkar has little formal training, so he just about makes a living in the film & TV industry in India. His profession is a higher form of meditation through which one can deny hunger and sleep - it's called editing. In his spare time thinks hard and writes stuff like this piece above. And in whatever time is left over, he does his own accounts and chases clients for money. As you must have noticed by now, he is also shamelessly besotted with Macintosh machines and considers them as God-sent gifts to man kind!

He builds and tinkers with computers, so some people get conned into believing that he knows a lot about computers and editing software, so they even pay him as a consultant. Really! If you love what he's written you can drop him a line at neil@misenscene.net and tell him he's the greatest. He even has a web site dedicated to Final Cut Pro where you can take in more of his writings.

If you're a budding editor you can make him feel good by asking for advice. But if you're looking for work, don't bother because he doesn't have contacts. And if you really hate his writings, write to him and give him some work, so he has no time to write stuff like this. But don't make him chase you for money; else he'll go back to writing.