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Issue: [March 1, 2015](#)

The Evolution of the Digital Intermediate

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Cinelicious on Sundance: *Boyhood* and Beyond

Cinelicious ([www.cinelicious.tv](#)), with locations in Hollywood and Santa Monica, is a creative studio that offers a host of post services that includes HD/2K/4K color grading for commercials, music videos and feature films, Flame VFX, creative finishing and VFX supervision, 2K/4K film scanning, final color for episodic television, restoration and, of course, film/digital dailies and DIs.

According to studio founder Paul Korver, "digital finish" is probably a more appropriate term to use today rather than digital intermediate for the services his studio offers. "You know, how it all came about: Things were shot on film and everything had to end up on film, and they would digitize the film in the middle and they would have more creative control over the final picture in color correction and visual effects by having a digital intermediate. But now, a lot of films are shot digitally. We just had two films at Sundance shot digitally."



The two films Korver is referring to are Rick Alverson's *Entertainment*, which Cinelicious completed the final color and mastering with colorist Lynette Duensing, and Gus Van Sant protégé Justin Kelly's *I Am Michael*, which was the first DI colored by Cinelicious' Tyler Fagerstrom, who previously collaborated with DP Chris Blauvelt to set the look for last year's Sundance Best Cinematography winner, *Low Down*.

"These films are labors of love," says Cinelicious' Korver. They previously contributed final film scanning or DI color for other Sundance breakouts, including Richard Linklater's *Boyhood* which, actually was shot on film.

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"That was pretty challenging," says Korver. "The biggest challenge was the metadata loss. Over the 12 years, I think there was something like three different post houses that did the dailies — they were all standard definition dailies to 29:9:7 DV25 tapes — but there was no consistency in the metadata workflow."

"Basically what we had to do was, because the timecode did not match up between the video tape and the film boxes, we ended up having to manually change all the timecode data to keycode data just by looking at the keycode map and manually retype out every single shot of the entire movie, change it from timecode to keycode manually," adds Fagerstrom.

In all, it turned out to be around 120 to 200 hours of film.

"There was also a framing question," adds Korver. "I think they switched DPs at one point and then there was some question what the exact aspect ratio of the 35mm was. So we ended up scanning the film at 4K and down sampling it to 2½K, which they were finishing in 2K — finishing 2K from a 4K source — that gave them the ability to resize, or do a slight pan-and-scan if necessary for what the intended framing was."

So, according to Korver, the big "broadstrokes" that made the studio's work on *Boyhood* unusual were the metadata inconsistencies, scanning in 4K and delivering 2½K for a 2K finish, the conform, and then restoration work needed to make the film look pristine.

"In addition to a standard dust busting that you would do, we definitely had to address some scratches and this almost chemical stain," says Korver. "The film's been around for 12 years, so stuff happens."

To complete the entire project, the team relied on DFT's Scanity high dynamic range scanner, Phoenix Refine for restoration and DaVinci Resolve from Blackmagic for the conform.

"I'm really excited about where we're at right now," adds Korver. "It's an exciting time, and we're excited about the projects we get to work on. We get to work on a broad array of camera formats — both digital and film. We view both as valid creative languages. I think it's going to be a more immersive experience in the theater as we get better cameras systems and projection technology."