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## Video Pros Get Product Feast at NAB

By Sean Wagstaff, special to eWEEK

LAS VEGAS—As if Greed and Lust aren't enough to liven up any trade show, the National Association of Broadcasters annual convention (see [photo gallery](#)) here is serving a week-long, all-you-can-eat buffet for gluttons of video and broadcast equipment, software and information—especially those with an appetite for high-end video and effects.

Capitalizing on attendees' desire for HDTV technology, Greed and Lust are two feature-rich new 10-bit SD-SDI and HD-SDI capture and output boards for Mac and Windows systems from Bluefish444, a division of Digital Voodoo. LUST, the company's top-of-the-line video-processing card, supports two channels of HD-SDI video and 12 channels of digital audio. Both cards are expected to ship this summer, although pricing has not yet been announced.

Discreet, the Autodesk animation and effects division, uncovered a suite of new video and effects products, including Lustre, a color grading system developed by Colorfront, which Discreet recently acquired. Lustre simplifies color grading and color correction in film at the processing stage. Users can now shoot their film or video normally, and do their color manipulations digitally—such as turning sunny day shots into moody shades of blue—using standard desktop PCs and off-the-shelf color calibration hardware.

There was no shortage of luster in the rest of Discreet's press-conference-by-the-pool at Caesar's Palace. The company also launched Cleaner XL, a Windows-only version of its batch video-compression system, which has been rewritten from scratch to support Intel hardware and the latest Windows codecs. The company said Cleaner XL serves up major speed improvements as well as unique new features for multiplatform video processing, such as the capability to filter color palettes automatically and to export video in many formats (such as HD, NTSC, PAL and streaming media) with a single click.

Finally, Discreet's Combustion, a video compositor, has been upgraded to Version 2.1. Enhancements include new particle effects and a deep price cut—from \$4,999 to \$999.

If Discreet's trumpets were a little hard to hear, it might have been thanks to the roar coming from the golden towers of the Mandalay Bay Hotel a couple of miles down the Strip, where Phil Schiller, Apple Computer Inc. senior vice president of worldwide product marketing, convened a media event at precisely the same moment as Discreet's. The timing may have been more than coincidence: [Apple's video products](#) compete head-on with Discreet's, although its new offerings won't ship before this summer.

One such offering is Apple's Shake 3, which will ship in June and compete with Discreet's Combustion. The new Shake will include motion and shape tracking tools for rotoscoping and motion effects, display of audio waveforms, film-grain effects, and an unlimited network renderer optimized for Apple's Xserve servers. The price is still set at \$4,985 for Mac OS X users, and roughly double that for the IRIX and Linux crowd.

If that doesn't leave competition quivering, Final Cut Pro 4 might. The new version, also expected in June, will include some 300 new features, with notable enhancements such as RT Extreme, for real-time compositing and effects; editing of both 8- and 10-bit uncompressed video formats (such as film, HD, SD and DV); and 32-bit-floating-point-per-channel video processing. Final Cut Pro 4 will also come with an advanced titling system, a soundtrack application for creating music; and a Compressor module for batch transcoding (*a la* Discreet's Cleaner). The new Final Cut will also provide an open extensible architecture and highly customizable user interface.

Part Three of Apple's big show was the announcement of DVD Studio Pro 2. This completely rewritten version of the DVD authoring software is designed to make the technical world of DVD creation as fast and easy as dropping 20 bucks in the dollar slots at Circus Circus. Apple hopes users will bet on professionally designed, customizable templates; an easy-to-use menu editor; timeline-based track editing; a new software-based MPEG-2 encoder, and an interface that mimics Final Cut Pro's. DVD Studio's price has been cut in half, to \$499; Version 2 is due in August.

Adobe Systems Inc. fired a salvo of its own at Apple with the premiere of Encore DVD, its own professional DVD-creation tool, with feature set (and summer ship date) that sound remarkably similar to DVD Studio Pro 2's. Encore looks a lot like other Adobe products, such as After Effects and Photoshop, and even comes with interactive design widgets borrowed from tools such as Adobe GoLive. Users will be able to drop in tracks of video and audio, edit them with a familiar timeline interface, and drop in Photoshop files and layers for creating menus and buttons. One thing Encore won't do is run on the Mac, barring a groundswell of consumer demand. (Take *that*, Apple!)

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Even Silicon Graphics Inc. was on hand with its Infinite Structure Storage Area Network, designed to give media companies access on demand to massive amounts of digital media, and it announced that it will support Mac OS X by year-end. However, the far sexier demo was going on in the kiosk of Alias|Wavefront, an SGI company, where attendees were treated to a demo of Version 5 of its 3D animation system, Maya. If vector rendering and hardware rendering are better than hitting an inside straight, then media pros will really lose their poker faces when they see the fast and furious polygon-reduction tool.

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