

# On Location: Going mobile in Hollywood

April 19, 2011 | 2:02 pm



Hollywood production is going mobile.

Two local technology companies, Sample Digital and Technicolor, have introduced applications that now allow production and studio executives to view “dailies” — scenes from movie and TV shoots — on their iPads.

About 15 million iPads were sold last year and the computer tablets have become wildly popular among studio and production executives, who frequently bring them to creative meetings to take digital notes on screenplays, among other tasks.

Seeking to tap into the demand, Los Angeles-based Sample Digital last week began selling an application that enables production executives to view and comment upon the day’s shoots, scripts, visual-effects shots and trailers directly on their iPads. The idea is to give harried studio executives around-the-clock access to the movies and shows under their watch.

The company, which manages the digital workflow for more than 100 TV shows and films, spent six months developing the app.

“We noticed that a lot of senior executives like the idea that they can walk around and begin to have access to content on the fly whether it’s in a boardroom or in a car or a hotel room,” said Patrick Macdonald-King, chief executive of Sample Digital.

Viewing dailies on mobile phones is a far cry from the days when studio executives and directors would huddle in screening rooms to watch the daily reels, or “rushes,” and select which scenes to leave on the cutting-room floor. Until a few years ago, dailies from shoots were typically stored on DVDs and then shipped to various locations, a process that became more costly as production increasingly moved out of Hollywood and projects took on multiple financing partners. More

recently, dailies are delivered online and accessible on PCs and laptops, which aren't as easy to lug around as a tablet.

"Everybody in the entertainment industry needs things immediately, and this is giving people what they want immediately," said Bobby Williams, vice president of postproduction for Lionsgate Television, which has been testing Sample Digital's iPad application, called dax/Mobile.

The studio plans to use the system on such productions as "Mad Men," "Nurse Jackie" and "Boss," the new Kelsey Grammer TV series that is shooting in Chicago.

Once the day's film or video shoots have been synchronized with audio and encoded for video streaming, a technician known as a data wrangler uploads the dailies onto the Sample Digital website. Approved customers tied to a given production connect to the site via their iPads, viewing a playlist of the day's sequences. They are able to comment and select preferred "takes," which are then passed along to an editor to assemble in a "rough cut" of the day's shooting.

The app costs only \$4.99 on Apple's iTunes store. But the real money for Sample Digital comes with the required subscription-based digital workflow system, which runs \$1,250 to \$2,000 per TV episode and up to \$15,000 per movie. Customers must also pay a fee to encrypt the streaming video to prevent illegal copying.

Technicolor also recently introduced an application that works with both the iPad and Android systems that gives its customers mobile access to dailies and other content.

"Tablets have kind of taken over the world like a freight train," said Bob Hoffman, spokesman for the French-owned company, which has a large operation in Hollywood. "We'd see a lot of executives come to meetings with them and they'd all have an Android or an iPad," he said. "It was just an obvious move for us."

-- Richard Verrier

*Photos: Edie Falco in "Nurse Jackie" (Credit: Showtime); and January Jones and Jon Hamm in "Mad Men." (Credit: AMC)*

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