

## The Matador

eQ takes color correction by the horns



# The Matador: eQ takes color correction by the horns

David Fandila is one of the best-known bullfighters in the world and the focus of a documentary called *The Matador*. *The Matador* is the epic tale of Fandila's quest to become the world's top-ranked matador. Heart-wrenching setbacks and thrilling successes dramatize 'El Fandi's' three-year journey across Spain and Latin America and into the pages of bullfighting history. More than one man's quest for greatness, *The Matador* is a story of love – of a son for his family, of audiences for their heroes, of a people for their cultural traditions, and of the bullfighter's paradoxical love for the majestic beast that he must kill to create his art.

## The big treatment

The film was originally conceived by Steve Higgins. For nearly three years Higgins and two cinematographers, Christopher Jenkins and James Morton-Haworth, accumulated footage that had been shot in High Definition on the Sony HDW-F900.

Higgins turned to Nina Gilden Seavey, a 25-year veteran of the documentary world to help pull the film together and turn it into a finished product. "I thought that this film needed a very big film treatment," Seavey said. "It needed to be high-end quality throughout all phases of the postproduction process. To me, *The Matador* is about artistry – about David's commitment and passion for his craft. In the creation of the film, we mirrored that artistry in the cinematography, the editing, and in the orchestral score such that both the story line and the filmmaking provide an intense, exciting and sometimes explosive experience for the audience."

Higgins adds, "In David, we were fortunate to have the trust of one of the world's best matadors. David and his family let us into this world to tell a story of hope, pain, sacrifice and triumph that otherwise would have been impossible to share."

The main focus of the 75 minute film is Fandila and his relentless pursuit to participate in 100 bullfights in one season. Usually a matador will fight 50-70 contests in a given season. It's difficult to measure the success of a matador, but certainly the ability to complete 100 fights is a worthy goal to respect. Fandila's persistence, stamina, strength and ability to actually get into the ring for 100 fights are a challenge to behold.

## Quality matters

Seavey said the film needed the highest commitment of both quality and talent that could be brought to it. She tapped Ian Rummer of TEAM Sound and Vision to edit the project. TEAM is located in Washington D.C. and includes digital video, audio postproduction and scoring, graphic design, animation, visual effects and field production. Under Seavey's direction, *The Matador* score was composed and orchestrated by John Califra. The music was recorded in Bulgaria by the Sofia Metropolitan Orchestra.

"On a film like this the color correction becomes as important as the editorial," said Seavey. "The colors are paramount for something as iconic as a bullfight and the look of that and the feel and the shifting light – you need an extremely experienced colorist and a system that can do justice."





### eQ, new best friend

That put a lot of demand on the post production, specifically on Rummer and in particular the Quantel eQ system with QColor. The eQ is strong as a comprehensive solution that provides advanced tools for each stage of the post process including editorial, mixed format management, keying and compositing, tracking and color correction. Before starting the color correcting process Rummer had to overcome a significant obstacle brought up by Seavey. She preferred to use the da Vinci since that is what she had used on several of her previous theatrical releases. She went as far as trying to convince TEAM's management to purchase the system. It was what she knew and loved.

"However, once I went into the Quantel world with Ian I became absolutely converted to the power of the eQ and QColor," said Seavey. "It was really tested in this film because of the demands and expectations that we put on the look and color correction in this project. I feel like I have a new best friend."

### The twilight zone

Rummer said the main decision to bring The Matador into the eQ was the color correction capabilities of QColor. The other important feature the eQ brought to the table was its multi-formatting capability. The primary source was HDCam 23.98PsF material. There were also High Definition 29.97i sources, NTSC, PAL, stills and QuickTime movies. According to Rummer the eQ not only accommodated the variety of formats, but the conversion quality was extremely high.

One of the reasons the color correction was so challenging was because bullfights start at 5pm – the time that is commonly referred to in the production world as the 'magic hour' – when the light is soft and changes dramatically. Continuity was an issue when condensing bullfights over a long period of time into a couple of minutes.

Depending on where the light was coming into the ring sometimes Fandila was standing in the shadows and then he would step into sunlight and sometimes, within the same shot, he would be standing in the shadows and the fans are seen in bright sunlight.

The goal was to create a balanced contrast that emphasized the detail in the shadows while protecting the brighter areas. This is difficult to achieve without crushing the blacks and clipping the highlights, which results in losing significant information.

"It was really tested in this film because of the demands and expectations that we put on the look and color correction in this project. I feel like I have a new best friend."

Nina Gilden Seavey



“The color grading tools combined with the keying, compositing, tracking and animation abilities of the eQ offer a toolset you don’t get in traditional color correction suites.”

Ian Rummer, TEAM Sound and Vision

### Key considerations

“Many times I used the HSL keyer to pull a luminance key and protect bright areas from the corrections I made to the shadows and then did a second correction on the protected, brighter areas,” said Rummer. “Other shots required a more sophisticated approach. There was a scene when David is carried out of the ring on the shoulders of his fans. It is a euphoric moment captured under stadium lighting at dusk. I tracked an animated mask to protect the natural light in the sky, which preserved the surreal quality of the scene.”

Rummer continued, “The color grading tools combined with the keying, compositing, tracking and animation abilities of the eQ offer a tool set you don’t get in traditional color correction suites.”

The Matador’s world premiere took place in March 2008 at the South by Southwest film festival where it also screened in competition. In addition, the documentary will be screening for theatrical, television and ancillary distributors both within the US and abroad.

The Matador is produced by Nina Gilden Seavey and Stephen Higgins. Higgins directed and Seavey co-directed the film. Scott Dunklee and Kristie Nova are the executive producers. Christopher Jenkins and James Morton-Haworth are the directors of photography, Ian Rummer served as editor, and John Califra composed and orchestrated the film’s score. For more information, please visit [matadorthefilm.com](http://matadorthefilm.com)

### At a glance

- Washington DC-based TEAM Sound and Vision is commissioned by Nina Seavey to post a high production values action documentary The Matador
- TEAM employs its eQ equipped with QColor in-context grading option to edit and color correct the project, which includes multiple format original material
- Variable lighting conditions on the shots impose stringent requirements on color correction which the eQ meets with flying colors

