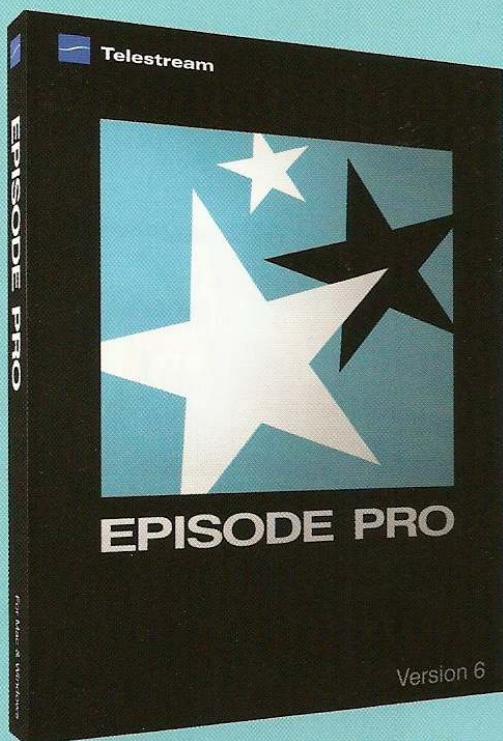[TEST DRIVE]

Examining Episode Pro 6

By David Hurd

Episode Pro 6
Photo courtesy of Telestream

For years I have struggled with getting my projects to look good on the Web. No matter how good they looked in HD, they would always get pixilated when played back in their new reduced-size format. To remedy this situation I tried various encoding programs but they usually had too many options, and it was a full-time job trying to figure out which options to use for a particular project.

As the paradigm shifted away from TV broadcast to Web broadcast, getting my projects to look good on the Web became more important than ever. And if I wanted to compete, I was going to need a user-friendly encoder that wouldn't waste hours of my time.

Thankfully, the new, user-friendly interface of Telestream's Episode 6 made my life so much easier as it has really has simplified the encoding process. For example, when I started doing blog videos for a new client, I found out how easy YouTube uploads can be. First, I took my high-definition master file and dropped it into the file

list box on the left side of the interface. Next, I clicked on the workflows button and selected YouTube HD. This action was reflected in the encoder settings box so that I could instantly see what codec was being used.

The preset automatically gave me two deployment boxes on the right side of the interface. By clicking on the YouTube deployment box, a deployment inspector window opened so that I could add the username, password, video title, description, video category and keywords for the YouTube upload. The second deployment box added a copy of the video to my desktop, so that I could view, e-mail it or just save a copy for later use. Now that everything was in place, all I had to do was to click on the submit button. Since I had used the private video option, the video was automatically uploaded to YouTube, and only my client could view it.

Episode 6 has been the easiest, fastest and cleanest workflow for the Web that I have ever used. Evidently, some major corporations are getting the same results. Many of the big guns — such as CBS, BBC, CNN, FOX, CBC, Comcast, Direct TV, Time Warner, MTV, Discovery and

Lifetime — use Telestream products to streamline operations, reach broader audiences and generate more revenue from their media.

Because of the shift away from broadcast to Web distribution, many large corporations have seen the success of Hulu and YouTube, and are now funding professional webisodes to market their products online — and to all of those millions of mobile devices. The good news is that the Web is generating new projects for us to work on. The bad news is that without proper encoding tools, it's difficult to transcode clean video for the Web in a timely manner.

Episode is an all-in-one encoder that includes a lot of presets and filters, which really makes the choice of choosing your encoder much easier. You also get the ability to add bumpers, trailers and watermarks to enhance and protect your video content. Episode 6 also has great video processing. I encoded an uncompressed 10-bit file to YouTube with excellent picture quality.

To cash in on the broadcast-to-Web transition, your shop needs the ability to encode for multiple display formats while keeping costs low. The new clustering and file-sharing capabilities built

Episode Pro 6 *Photo courtesy of Telestream*

into Episode 6 allow you a more efficient use of your existing computing resources, so that you can achieve faster transcoding of your projects. And size doesn't matter. If you're a small shop like me, with one computer and a **RAID** or a large house with many computers, Episode 6 has you covered.

Episode 6's exclusive One-Click Clustering allows you to distribute your workload across permanent or ad hoc clusters as computers become available. With One-Click Clustering, users can easily join or set up a cluster of mixed Apple Mac and PC computers to get the work done faster, maximizing your productivity and equipment investment. The cool thing is that because of Episode's built-in file sharing and easy configuration, clusters can be set up without the need for an expensive IT guy. Permissions-based clustering allows users to join a cluster, name clusters, view machines on the cluster as well as the workload, and determine the status of each.

For time-critical workflows, Telestream's Split-and-Stitch technology and parallel encoding allow you to either saturate the processing power of a single machine or distribute files across a cluster of Mac or PC servers to achieve some really fast encoding speeds. In addition, Episode 6 adds format support for high-quality Main Concept H.264 and MPEG video formats.

I've found that Episode Pro 6 is an awesome tool that's easy to use and consistently delivers superb-looking Web video. So if you want to cash in on video for the Web, this is the tool to own.

MSRP:
Episode is priced at $495 and includes support for Flash 8 and 9, H.264, Windows Media, MPEG1/2/4, VC-1, DV, 3GPP and much more, plus One Click Clustering and file sharing, processing of one job at a time, and unlimited batch processing.

Episode Pro is priced at $995 and adds support for high-end professional formats plus parallel encoding of two jobs at a time.

Episode Engine is priced at $3,995 and adds unlimited parallel encoding plus Split-and-Stitch distributed encoding for high-volume throughput at maximum speed. The upgrade fee from Episode 5 to Episode 6 is $149 while Episode Pro 5 to Episode Pro 6 is $299.

Contact: www.telestream.net.

My review system consisted of an Apple Mac Pro 12-core 2.93GHz with 24GB of www.lifetimememory.com RAM, an Intel SSD drive, mounted in a tray from www.maxupgrades.com, an ATTO ExpressSAS R380 controller card connected to two Ci Design 8-bay RAID cases, loaded with 16 Seagate 450GB SAS drives, a Blackmagic Design DeckLink HD Extreme 3D card with output viewed on a TVLogic 17-inch HD monitor and a 2s2 24-inch monitor. An NVIDIA GeForce120 card connected to a 24-inch EIZO ColorEdge monitor mounted on Monitor in Motion stands. A Cubix GPU-Xpander with two NVIDIA 4000 cards for extra CUDA processing for CS5.5 and the DaVinci Resolve for Mac, the G-SPEED Q for backup and small projects, two Genelec audio monitors, a Mackie mixer, an intuos tablet and a Tangent Wave panel.

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