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## Great ape roars onto the big screen.

Weta Digital relies on Discreet® Lustre® color grading systems software to help them establish the unique and stylized look and feel for Universal Pictures' *King Kong*.

When bringing the great *King Kong* back onto the silver screen, the filmmakers wanted to make sure viewers experienced a visceral, emotional connection to the great beast and the time period in which the film takes place. Digital color grading was used to create a look that's not contemporary and really connects the audience to the eeriness of Skull Island and iconic imagery of 1933 New York City.

Supervising Digital Colorist Dave Cole says, "Establishing the right look and feel for *King Kong* was an essential part of the storytelling. We achieved this with the Discreet Lustre system. This extremely powerful tool made it possible for the film to appear realistic yet stylized. The grading capabilities of Autodesk's Discreet Lustre system have been used extensively, allowing the creative desires of the director, director of photography, and visual effects supervisors to be realized."

During the shooting of the live action—much of which was done in front of a green screen—Weta Digital needed the freedom to capture the actors' performances and then pull both the live-action and computer-generated (CG) elements together in post-production. They relied on the ability of the Discreet Lustre system to perform color grading both before and after CG elements were incorporated to maintain continuity of color and lighting throughout the film.

Weta Digital

By Camille Caron

Autodesk®



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"In post-production, we wanted to be free to experiment and discover what works best," states Dave Cole, Supervising Digital Colorist at Weta Digital. "Can this scene appear more realistic? Is there a way to make this shot more interesting? Do the highlights need a slight lift or do we need to pull more information out of the shadows? Discreet Lustre lets us explore these possibilities."

In setting the tone for the period in which the film takes place, lighting and color were key aspects during the making of *King Kong*. The non-linear workflow of the Discreet Lustre system influenced the film's creative process. The filmmakers knew they had control and flexibility in the digital grading post-production phase, which gave them more freedom while shooting. For example, when shooting took place at various times of day, scene lighting could later be corrected with the Discreet Lustre system to match the preferred lighting and time of day.

With five Discreet Lustre color-grading systems installed at Weta Digital in New Zealand, digital colorists were able to explore numerous options for the film's look. After scanning the entire movie using an ARRI film scanner, colorists took a few selected sequences into the Lustre system and put various looks on them to create "Color Bibles." Each Bible contained two or three digitally color graded shots. These were passed to Peter Jackson and the Director of Photography for review. Once approved, the Bible became the color reference for the final color grade.

"We used the Discreet Lustre system as part of the entire visual effects color grading process while making *King Kong*," says Joe Letteri, Senior Visual Effects Supervisor at Weta Digital. "We used it to grade at the front end and also at the very end of our pipeline to grade the final images. As the elements came in, the Lustre system helped us work out the look for complex environments like Skull Island and 1933 New York."

The end result is a stunning, stylized film in which color greatly enhances the viewer's experience and helped Peter Jackson and Weta Digital weave their fantastic tale of beauty meets beast.