

DIGITAL DIRECTIONS



Chris Key on the Edit System.



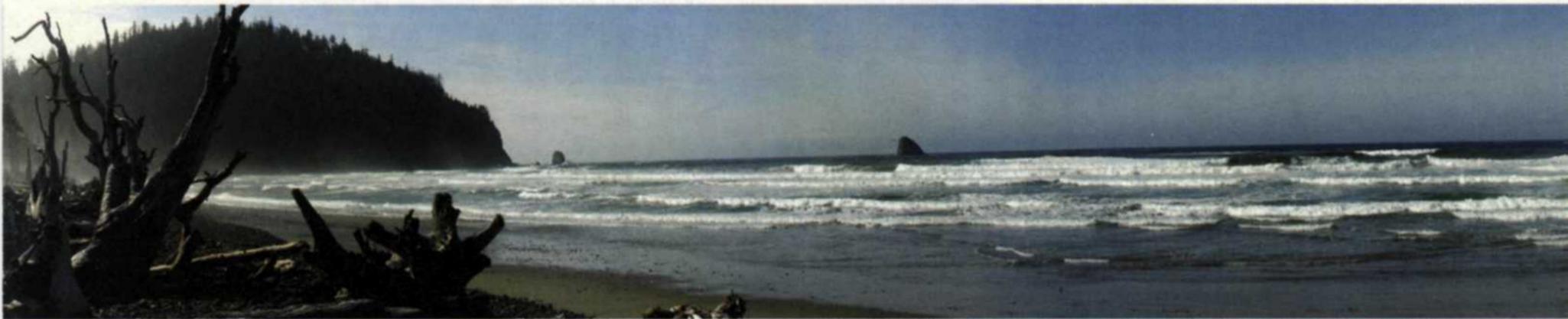
Al Berreth checking print from Novajet.



Scitex 320 Smartscan



AVCAM 350 degree pan camera



A Story of **PANORA**

This is the story of how digital photography solved a traditional photo problem. Perhaps you have a similar "mystery" you'd like to share.

A FEW YEARS ago, we purchased a camera advertised in the Thrifty Ads as a "unique underwater camera." Little did we know when we bartered for it that it was one of only 10 "antique uniques." In its day, this 40-pound military camera, called a "Navcam," was used by scuba divers aboard



Final print.



MIC Proportions

Jack & Sue Drafahl

submarines to document enemy harbors.

A diver would load 100 feet of 35mm film and then seal the clamshell camera housing together. He would then swim out of the submarine into the harbor, surface with the camera on his head, level the camera using a small periscope with a

bubble level and take pictures of all the ships in the harbor. The end result was a 14-inch long negative that covered a 350° circle with degree markers in the perforations. Each 100-foot roll of film held 75 images.

After stripping 20 coats of military gray

paint off the camera, we found a beautiful black anodized finish. We loaded some film, attached a camera strap and headed out to put this camera to the test. Our first experiences with the camera were on an Oregon beach. When we put this camera on our head and leveled it, using the

periscope, we found that many of the people on the beach were quickly taking cover. We realized that we must have looked like we had some kind of weapon on our heads. Oh, well...

Since the exposure range in a 350° circle is very drastic, we decided to use 35mm VPS color negative film. We hoped that the wide exposure latitude of this film would allow us to capture the whole image in one printing range.

Taking 75 images actually took a lot longer than we thought. Once we finally processed the film we got very excited as we looked at the results. Our excitement soon faded when we realized that printing the negatives would be difficult and very expensive.

We tried printing a negative in sections, but it just did not have the same effect as printing the entire negative in one piece. So the negatives were put away, and every so often we would shoot a few more and add to our kitty of 14-inch-long negatives.

One day we were talking to Al Berreth, the owner of U-Develop photo lab in Portland, OR, about his digital services. He has a unique business that allows customers to come and print by the hour, both

color and black-and-white prints. The photo lab portion of his business is considerably larger than ours, and he has recently converted to a hybrid lab, mixing traditional photo and digital services.

He was telling us about his new Scitex 320 Super Scan flatbed scanner, and the great results he was getting. We asked him how large an image he could scan, and the reply was 11x17 inches. A light bulb in our heads came on. Could he scan a 14-inch-long color negative? It looked like the new digital process could solve our traditional photo lab problem.

We gave him three negatives to try and he picked the best one for output to an inkjet. Chris Key, who does most of the scanning and editing for U-Develop, made a special mask for the negative and made the first scan at 600 dpi.

The end result was an image of 1100 pixels by 17,500 pixels which was 55MB. U-Develop does a great job fine-tuning and cleaning up scans, but felt we might like to do the honors. Actually, we think they wanted us to see how good their scan was, so, the image was burned to CD so we could transfer it back to our editing system.

We tweaked the image in contrast and

color, cleaned up a few dust particles, and re-burned the edited image as a second session on the same CD. We returned the CD and Chris started to run some tests on their 36-inch NovaJet inkjet printer.

U-Develop uses Macintosh systems for their scanning and editing, then transfers the final to a PC-Pentium that prepares the image before it is sent to the NovaJet III inkjet printer. We were now heading to the final, most impressive step in the process. We're not just talking about the inkjet process, but about group of lab people watching a 1 foot by 14-foot-long color print coming off a printer in one piece.

It was definitely breathtaking. Who says digital photography can't be exciting? The whole printing process had only taken half an hour. As the last couple of feet were coming off the Novajet, someone asked, "How are you going to mount that thing?" We all laughed, but now we wonder who makes 14-foot-long mounting material!

Jack and Sue Drafaul own and operate a custom lab in Portland, OR. They are also professional photographers, specializing in underwater photography.



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