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FX WIZARD

**BORIS  
YAMNITSKY**

**THE  
BORIS  
EFFECT**

BY J.D. FREEDMAN



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# FX WIZARD: THE BORIS EFFECT

By J.D. Freedman

**Boris FX, 2012 NAB Show Booth # SL2914**

Spring is here; a time that heralds the emergence of new growth and innovation, a time of promise as thousands are drawn west in the annual migration to NAB. Attendees...exhibitors... in all, nearly one hundred thousand media professionals from across the globe flock to this week-long premiere of the latest and greatest new offerings in media technology. On the show floor this year, as he has been since 1993 will be one of the founding fathers and consummate innovators of plug-in effects, Boris Yamnitsky. We spoke with Mr. Yamnitsky about being based in Boston, and the role that Boris FX plays in the ever changing NLE market.

#### A BRIEF HISTORY

Boris first came to Boston as a BU grad student and was eventually recruited to join the development team for the Media 100 non-linear video editing system. Media 100 grew to become the alternative to Avid, another "Boston company" leading the race for worldwide NLE dominance. An easy smile crosses his face as Boris reminisces about how the Route 128 area was the "Silicon Valley" of its day with so many technology companies sprouting up it became known as "America's Technology Highway"

"That is where the computer industry really got started in this country ... Silicon Valley is a newcomer."

Boris's part of the Media 100 puzzle was to figure out how to add some whiz bang effects into the mix. He worked closely with Adobe to write the code that allowed the integration of their transitions into the Media 100 editing suite. This challenging role of figuring out how to get different software packages to "communicate" was one at which he excelled well enough to launch a company in 1995 which created filters and effects that editors could just "Plug-in" to their NLE of choice. That role still defines Boris today, long after many other players from that early field of competitors have faded into the past.

John MacGibbon, an award-winning editor of WGBH's Frontline TV series remembers those early days.

"I was devoted to Adobe After Effects until Boris Red appeared on the scene back in the early 90s. It has been my first choice ever since. The Boris interfaces are much less sterile than After Effects; the tools and filters are well thought out and that makes it a more enjoyable "work environment"."

Boris Yamnitsky Founder and President of Boris FX  
Photo by J.D. Freedman



As a "Power User" of Boris FX I've had a lot of contact with the company and it is extremely impressive that so much is accomplished at Boris. They are constantly at the forefront and are putting out a product that is on par with offerings from Adobe, Apple and the others but do you know how big Adobe is?

I heard that sentiment echoed by staff when I visited the Boris FX offices in Boston's trendy seaport district. Boris has a management style that achieves immense productivity from a lean, tight knit group of staff. It seems that is the core "Boris Effect" from which all others derive.

From its humble beginnings Boris FX has grown to serve over a million users worldwide. Though his company could be based anywhere Boris prefers Boston.

"Being in Boston is great...there are so many resources and such an incredible pool of talent here thanks to MIT, Harvard and so many of the other schools. All of our software is written in the United States, mostly in this office. I enjoy working with the most talented engineering team in the industry, mentoring junior members and collaborating with senior staff. My team is second to none and is a huge motivating factor for me."

#### BORIS TODAY

I asked how his company has been able to stand the test of time in such a competitive and rapidly changing marketplace.

"It's all about our clients."

From the very beginning Boris FX has always had a clear focus on the needs of their customers. They keep the lines of communication open on a number of levels.

A continuous Beta program links employees in product development with active users in the field. They keep an upstream channel open, listening closely to the needs and desires of editors and effects artists. That industry feedback has a strong influence - guiding the development of future products.

The Boris FX website offers a vibrant interface for visual communicators seeking resources to enhance their presentations. There are over a dozen channels filled with free tutorials. There are also webinars, forum tips and sample galleries that clearly illustrate the full gamut of visual tools, filters and effects they provide.

Boris employees monitor online forums like creative cow and avid users group to identify challenges faced by Boris users. The answers they provide may include a screen capture movie with a visual walk through of exactly how that user can achieve the desired effect. These screen caps are archived to the Boris Site and can be accessed through the "Forum Tips" section of Boris TV.

Boris distributes a free online newsletter with tutorials and "free goodies" to anyone who signs up on their site.

All this helps the company anticipate the needs of a changing market far enough in advance to develop software which offers their client's solutions to new problems as they emerge. Boris discussed one example of this:

"It seems that video is replacing the printed word as the preferred medium of communication. "Video Production" is no longer confined to professional sets with fully equipped crews. So we have created solutions to support these new market segments." Now you can "fix in post" things like color temperature balance that you may not have the time and resources to fine tune on set.

Boris has broadened the focus of their offering

to include a series of "Image Restoration" filters that combat a number of production woes including The "Optical Stabilizer" filter. It uses optical flow technology to analyze and smooth out shaky camera work. There is a filter that can eliminate the flicker of a strobing fluorescent light or uneven shutter exposure. The new "wire remover filter" does just that, while the "motion key filter" can be used to "disappear" a moving foreground object that appears in a shot. They have also found a way to empower Producer's who want to access that "treasured archive" of SD footage they've owned for years by using the "uprez filter" to transform it into HD.

"Sound Bite" is another helpful workflow tool which enables editors to "quickly and accurately find any word or phrase spoken in recorded media" stored on their computer. The list goes on...

All this and more will be on display at the Boris FX booth #SL2914 at the 2012 NAB Show including the latest version of BCC 8, Boris Continuum Complete 8, which is a very significant release. It has a full range of newly upgraded filters too long to list, but it includes the image restoration tools, color grading, extruded text, 3D particle FX, etc., all of which have been fine-tuned to take advantage of multi-processor CPUs and OpenGL hardware acceleration. BCC 8 is available in versions designed to work with all major NLE platforms and comes with a transfer utility that allows VFX migration between the most popular NLEs. Boris tasked his development team with creating the best 3D particles, lens flares, glow, and lights in the industry, and they rose to the challenge.

#### THE FUTURE

I asked Boris what he finds exciting in his daily work and about his view of the future. He responded:

"I'm driven by a strong desire to create and publish software tools for creatives. I thrive on beta lists and user forums. I love learning the new needs of my users in the ever-changing technological landscape and applying the latest achievements of the worldwide research community to solving challenging technical puzzles.

"The future? It's no secret that a lot of future innovation is going to be web-centric and much of it will contain a video component. You've seen how much of this company now revolves around our website, but technology is enabling so many exciting initiatives that weren't possible before. I attended one of my son's MIT classes and found myself sitting next to a big video camera that was recording the class. This is part of the new MITx initiative. They are recording everything and putting the entire curriculum online [providing] free access to all of their courses to anyone who wants to learn. Now that is a real game changer - pretty amazing".

As an editor myself I tried to peer into the future through this man's informed perspective. I once edited a TV series for a producer that bemoaned the need for us "pesky" editors and kept wishing for a voice interface that would allow him to just talk the machine into submission. I guess he felt he could somehow con it into delivering a finished episode out of a pile of video clips based on a few of his helpful suggestions. I used to joke with my fellow editors as we scoffed about this, reasoning that the true art of editing has more to do with creating a storyline that conveys a meaningful message in a visually engaging way than it does with just memorizing which buttons to push. When I asked Boris about the potential for developing a voice interface for video editing he pondered the question briefly. Fears of my rapidly evaporating job security in this age of automation rose within, but I was relieved by

his response.

"I don't see the value. The user interfaces for editing have been well designed for maximum efficiency and that is why they are configured around hand motions. Adjustments are achieved by buttons, and sliders, mouse clicks and moves which would take longer to describe verbally and be much more difficult for the software to properly interpret. I can see the potential for a gestural interface using something like the Microsoft Kinect camera which might eliminate the mouse. But I don't believe a verbal interface is a practical alternative."

I left the interview impressed with all I had heard, and with visions of future editors controlling their edit sessions through interactive user interfaces like the one in Spielberg's film, MINORITY REPORT.

As I departed the expansive Boris FX offices I thought about the "secret of success" that had transported Boris Yamnitsky from his humble beginnings to his current position.



## BORIS FX



**TOP TO BOTTOM:** Boris Continuum Complete 8 has a full range of newly upgraded filters too long to list. Montage courtesy of Boris FX. / Boris Yamnitsky at his desk in Boston, MA. Photo by JD Freedman.

A story from WGBH's triple Emmy award-winning editor John MacGibbon came to mind.

"I called Boris FX and let them 'have it' about controls that needed improvement. Later that day I got a call back ... from Boris, not the company, the man. He took what I was saying seriously. He wanted to understand and address my concerns.

Think about that ... can you imagine calling Apple about Final Cut Pro X when it was released in early 2011 and getting a call back from Steve Jobs?"

*After years of working on numerous productions from commercials to feature films in New York, Miami, and Auckland, JD recently returned to his hometown of Boston. He can be contacted at [www.jdfreedman.net](http://www.jdfreedman.net).*