

Thanks to Colorfront, I now get to see my kids!

Colorist Tim Wreyford and his experience with Colorfront's Streaming Server Mini

It's not as though colorist Tim Wreyford was actively looking for a means to address the work/life balance, or indeed the ability to shrink time and space. These powers actually came his way by happenstance, after signing-up as a beta tester for **Colorfront's Streaming Server Mini** live/remote-working technology in 2022.

Wreyford lives on the coast in a quiet part of New South Wales, Australia, about a three-hour drive, on a good day, from his daily bread-and-butter work in Sydney. He began his career working at post houses in the city, before successfully branching-out as a freelance colorist, working with production houses and their ad agency clients on major advertising campaigns for blue chip brands such as Kia, BMW, Toyota, Audi, Hyundai, Jaguar, Dell, Red Bull, Japan Airway's, Jacob's Creek, Airbnb and Asics, to name just a few, along with music videos, documentaries, short films and independent features



In 2017, he relocated his fledgling family from the city to the coast, and freely admits it was a bold move, due to the uncertainty as to how some clients might have responded. Being an in-demand colorist working on high-profile campaigns, he took to traveling back-and-forth to work in the city to minimize any potential risk.

“Way before remote working was a viable or even a palatable proposition, and long before joining-up as beta tester for Colorfront Streaming Server Mini, I travelled a lot for work. It was a bit nerve-wracking moving the family away from Sydney, because I didn't know how it would affect my clients. So, to be on the safe side, I didn't advertise it, except amongst my closest mates and allies,” Wreyford explains.

“Looking back now, there was no need to worry as business has always been good. But at the time, living outside of Sydney meant I had to make regular journeys for work. As I was always required in the grading suite for a 9am start, or earlier, I had to travel down the night before, which entailed booking accommodation, never mind food and fuel expenses. And, when the job was done, I typically would not get back home until the late evening or well-after dark, which meant I missed time with the family.



“I worked that way until Covid hit. That's when people really started investigating how to operate remotely, and the idea has since become a perfectly acceptable practice. Today, thanks to Colorfront Streaming Server Mini, remote grading has become a way of life – it's the perfectly-acceptable new normal for me and my clients, who might be in different parts of the world during a live/remote grading session.”

Before adopting Colorfront's streaming technology, Wreyford says his initial remote workflow involved rounds of uploading and downloading work-in-progress via his home broadband connection, with written notes and instructions from clients being sent via email or posted on collaborative online video-review platforms.

"It worked, but getting to the final result could be a slow, time-consuming process. Also, color is very subjective, and communication about creative intentions can get easily muddled. So, working that way was far from being an interactive experience.

"I still work in this way with some clients and it can work as long as you have a good working relationship with them and really know what they do and don't like. But, having the live streaming option via Colorfront's Streaming Server Mini has greatly improved the workflow.



Before beta testing Colorfront Streaming Server Mini Wreyford says he was aware of a number of systems that could enable live/remote grading, but admits, "when I looked into them, either the service-offering or the hardware requirements were far too expensive to justify the means."

"In July 2022, **Stuart Monksfield** at **Mojo Media Solutions** in **Sydney** mentioned that Colorfront were developing a much more affordable software-only solution – the Streaming Server Mini. It sounded interesting and I enlisted as a beta tester, and that's really when the game changed dramatically."

Wreyford runs his Colorfront Streaming Server Mini on the same workstation he uses for color grading – namely a 2019 Mac Pro, with dual AMD Radeon Pro Vega II 32GB graphics cards and 8Tb internal SSD RAID storage, connected to an external 56Tb RAID. Grading is done using Blackmagic DaVinci Resolve Studio and a Blackmagic Mini Panel control surface. A Blackmagic Decklink 8K Pro card feeds the video signal to an LG C1 55-inch 4K OLED screen, via a LUT box for Rec.709 monitoring, expertly calibrated by Monksfield.

“Installing Streaming Server Mini beta software was straightforward and my overall spend on getting set-up for remote grading was around AUD \$1,000 (USD \$670), but this was only due to needing to upgrade the video card to the Blackmagic Decklink 8K Pro, as my older card was on its way out.”

Whilst Wreyford’s technical set-up has more than enough fire-power for color-grading purposes, he is astonished at just how low the broadband connection speed requirement is for Streaming Server Mini to work effectively.

“I’m basically using nothing more than home internet,” he says, “which takes the form of an optical fiber to a node down the street and then copper into the home. I’m getting about 62Mbits per second download speed and around 32Mbits on upload. Whilst that’s not fantastic in itself, what is extraordinary is that it is more than enough to run Streaming Server Mini absolutely flawlessly, as it only needs 10Mbs per second to function.”

Other than a few expected bug fixes, Wreyford reports minimal disruption during his experience as a beta tester. Since the start of 2023 he has been working from home using the latest shipping version of Streaming Server Mini, which he says is “rock-solid reliable, as are Colorfont’s technical support team, who have been super-quick at helping resolve any issues.”

Working from his home studio using Streaming Server Mini for live grading/review sessions, Wreyford has successfully worked on major advertising campaigns for clients spread far and wide. These include: Kia, with director Simon Thomas at production

company Elastic in Sydney; and a Head & Shoulders commercial, which was attended simultaneously by the director and production team at Elastic from two different locations in Sydney, plus agency executives over in Singapore.



He also worked on an action-sports project for a mountain bike film with New Zealand-based production company Hunt Cinema. This involved director Hunter Paull and producer Nick Stevenson being in two different locations in New Zealand, and co-director Scott Robb in Canada – all working remotely and viewing the live Colorfront stream concurrently as Wreyford graded from home.

Another longer-form project, was the surfing adventure feature, *Corners Of The Earth – Kamchatka*, directed by Spencer Frost and Guy Williment.

“Using Streaming Server Mini on *Corners Of The Earth*, with Spencer and Guy, was an awesome experience,” Wreyford says. “At the end of every day I would send the team a streaming invite to go over the day’s progress, and I could then make any changes live and on-the-fly. This was a huge time-saver on such large project and it was ideal for them too as they had other shoots during the day. Despite with the distance between us, it kept the grade running smoothly and on time.”

Before grading a commercial, Wreyford typically downloads the media overnight as the overall size of the assets required is not huge. On longer-form projects, the media is shipped to me via hard-drive.

“Once I have the media on my workstation, grading/review sessions take place live and in real-time,” he explains. “Clients, wherever they might be, only need Colorfront Streaming Player video receiver software, plus a local broadband/wi-fi connection, and they can see what I am doing instantly, with color fidelity guaranteed. This might be on an iPad, a professional monitor, or even an iPhone over 4G or 5G.

“Generally-speaking, we get on the telephone or do Zoom call during the session, and the collaborative, interactive experience of working and conversing this way – with the director, DP, agency and client – is a close as you can get to being in a room together, even though they might be hundreds of miles away across the country, or thousands of miles away on different continents. Because everyone is seeing the same pictures and color, they can convey to me what they want and I can arrive at the aesthetic look much quicker, without confusion, and that’s really cool.

“Some clients like to view the entire stream live, but others may not have the time for this. In these situations, I set-up a live grading session to establish looks on hero shots. The client will then continue with their day whilst the shot-matching takes place, and another live grading session is set-up once all shots are graded and ready for them to review live.

“My clients absolutely love viewing the grade this way, and it’s made even better by the fact that the Colorfront Streaming Player app is color-managed. It means that, if on the client end, they are not viewing on a calibrated grading monitor, but using devices like laptops, iPads, iPhones, etc. instead, I am confident that they are viewing the most accurate way possible on such devices.”

Whilst Wreyford and his clients appreciate the fact that Colorfront Streaming Server Mini offers 256-bit AES encryption and NexGuard forensic watermarking for security – especially when working on high profile jobs – it’s really the spirit of togetherness that Wreyford treasures most.

“I thrive during the collaborative process that Colorfront technology enables,” he says. “One of the great things about Streaming Server Mini is that there can be multiple streams, and what’s kind of mind-blowing is that participants can be anywhere. All they need is a broadband connection and the Streaming Player app.

“Whatever the project, my clients have been impressed by the visual quality of working remotely, and are 100% happy with me working up here on their projects. The idea of remote working has become perfectly viable and acceptable, and it is here to stay.”

He concludes, “I have a passion for colour and beautiful imagery. Now I have the remote workflow get the work done effectively and efficiently. And, thanks to Colorfront, I also now get to see my kids – on the daily school-run in the mornings and at dinner every evening.”