



# A CREATIVE IDEA'S JOURNEY TO REALITY

BY THOMAS J. STRODEL

The idea started when my wife and I were on our honeymoon. We realized that if you veer off the beaten tourist path, you're more likely to integrate into the local culture, and as a result, have a far more enjoyable and fulfilling time while traveling.

The idea that blossomed out of that trip was a high definition television show that celebrated the culture, adventure, and luxury of a place. Other travel shows included one or two of these elements. But none had all three. That was the hook. Over the last few years, the idea gelled, and in January of 2004 my company started moving forward with it.

Our usual strategy with the development of show ideas is to create a pilot or promo, which is sent to targeted networks, distributors, financiers, and others. However, funding a travel show, shot on-location, out of the country, and in high definition was not an inexpensive proposition. Instead, we created a paper-based pitch — a one-page document, which clearly describes the genre, audience, and description of the show.

During the development of the sell-sheet, we worked on matching the show to a network. This is a very important step requiring extreme precision. Programming needs to fit the network like a glove. INHD offered to help fund the pilot in exchange for the right to broadcast the show on their high definition network. The remaining funding would come from trade-outs, personal investment, and what I like to call "favor financing."

Choosing the location to shoot the pilot was easy. I've always been intrigued by the Caribbean island of St. Lucia. It has a wonderful depth of culture, plenty of adventure activities, and a lot of luxury accommodations.

I brought on William Kearney, a writer who we've worked with before. Kearney worked on a script that would embody the positioning of the show and the first-hand

observations from my island visit. The result included the perfect combination of culture, adventure, and luxury wrapped into a great storyline.

Due to our budget limitations, crew size needed to be kept to a minimum. Steve Miller would be our DP, and topside/underwater camera operator (with help from his son, Matthew), and Mike Ryan would be on audio. Daniel Conrad, our production manager would accompany us as well as our writer. I would produce and direct. Finally, we needed a host. After an extensive casting process, we chose Sandi Gardiner, an Aussie living in L.A.

Our camera equipment consisted of the SONY F900 HDCAM high definition camera, and Amphibicam underwater housing both rented at a great discount from our long-time friends at Air Sea Land Productions.

We needed to acquire the footage for two half-hour shows in just five days. Despite the packed schedule and dodging two hurricanes circling the Caribbean, we were able to accomplish our task.

Once back in New York, Lilka Hara, our editor, set about the process of putting together the shows. Since we shot in the HDCAM format, there were several workflow procedures we had to create. When the roughs were done and approved by the network, we finalized the edit at Air Sea Land Productions, and sent the masters to the network. The pilot for "Destination: St. Lucia" (episodes 1 and 2) has been in rotation on the INHD network since September.



Images courtesy 24fps Productions

Our final step was to sell the series. After a Herculean sales push that included a visit to NATPE multiple face-to-face pitches, several copies of the DVD pilot, and many rejections, our team was successful in securing interest from the Fine Living network. We are now in full production on a 13-part series, which will premiere this fall.

Focusing on travel, sports, adventure, lifestyle, and factual genres, 24fps Productions is a New York City-based production company that specializes in creating programming for cable, broadcast, and satellite distribution using the latest in high definition digital cinematography, film, and video. 24fps Productions and its production partners have produced projects for ABC, NBC, CBS, Cablevision, ESPN, MTV, The History Channel, Time Warner, The Food Network, Metro TV, and others. The company is currently working on the development of a variety of programming in the lifestyle, sports, and documentary genres for both high definition and standard definition formats. Visit the 24fps Productions' Web site at [www.24fpsproductions.com](http://www.24fpsproductions.com).