



## *Netflix unscripted dating show Sexy Beasts falls in love with Dolby Vision*

When Lion TV updated the unscripted dating show *Sexy Beasts* for Netflix, it found that the greater colour gamut and high dynamics of Dolby Vision HDR had much to offer.



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*Sexy Beasts* is a dating show where suitors compete to be chosen, with a twist. Until the final choice has been made, the participants wear Hollywood-grade intricate prosthetic masks.

We talked to the Lion TV production team about their first fling with Dolby Vision and how they lost their hearts to HDR. We also spoke to the experienced picture team at Fifty Fifty about their collaboration with production, using their tried and tested Dolby Vision workflows.

### **This is one of the first reality HDR shows in the UK.**

#### **What prompted this?**

Simon Welton, Executive Producer, Lion TV: "Netflix was interested in doing 4K HDR on an unscripted reality show and it seemed a win-win for everyone. It was the first time for our camera team and our series director, so it was all very exciting."

### **What did the venue mean for the production and HDR?**

Sam Campbell, Series Director: "HDR gives you a lot of freedom to be fluid, move quickly, because you're capturing everything for the grade. We could make decisions fast, use ideas the venue inspired, shoot, and move on. We got a lot of confidence from a short test shoot, to see how the cameras performed, how the venue looked, and most importantly, how the prosthetics looked in HDR. Scenes we would previously see as too contrasty, too shadowy, we knew would be great in grade. We could work with fewer worries and much more thrilling results."

### **What did you learn from that test shoot?**

Welton: "We found the prosthetics were going to look amazing, with incredible detail. The prosthetics artists' work was astonishing, and we got it all. I was concerned that it wouldn't quite work, but the minute we saw the prosthetics in grade, we knew we had the show's special magic."



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Joe Stabb, Senior Colourist, Fifty Fifty: "We experimented with in-camera effects, flares and so on, and the test proved how well those worked. Today's HDR tools bring in detail and vibrancy, and that carries across the trim. The prosthetics look great in HDR, but the really exciting thing for me was how amazing they looked in SDR. For the full series, some shots I didn't touch in the trim, some I tweaked for the look of the show, contrasting naturalism with high-impact hero shots. Both HDR and SDR were faithful to the story we told."

#### **How well did you find Dolby Vision HDR worked for this genre?**

Campbell: "HDR is great for high-end productions, but it's even more useful on an unscripted show like *Sexy Beasts*. With scripted shows, you have huge control. You set your shots with perfect lighting, get the take just so. [Here] we plan, but we can't dictate how a shot will go. HDR helps out hugely. It'll capture all the detail in the contrasts, highlights and backgrounds no matter what. That adds everything to visual storytelling."

Julian Nelson, Head of Picture, Fifty Fifty: "Unscripted series like *Sexy Beasts* lend themselves to Dolby Vision. Sam did an amazing job with the crew on set. They were throwing lights into the lens, getting amazing flares in camera, things you wouldn't get anywhere else. And once that's in a Dolby Vision environment, when we're in the grade, it brings it all to life. You can really play with these amazing lights."

#### **Was it a steep learning curve, and if so, did you feel restricted?**

Campbell: "No to both. It was more liberating and creative almost from the start. For example, at the last minute, weather pushed an end scene indoors to the main hall, full of dark cavernous depths. The director of photography reassured me that 'It's HDR, it'll be fine', so that liberated me. And it looked really good. One hundred per cent."

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### **Could you go back to SDR?**

Stabb: "There's so much more scope with HDR. We're thinking about doing an HDR grade for an SDR-only deliverable because it works so well. I really hope that we're moving to HDR by default, especially as Dolby Vision-capable devices become more common."

Nelson: "It's becoming common practice in the industry to have Dolby Vision as the master for other HDR deliverables, such as mastering HDR10 deliverables in Dolby Vision first. It's increasingly economical to think that way, and you can't beat the flexibility of being able to quickly give someone a great SDR-viewable version."

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*Sexy Beasts* is streaming now on Netflix.

