

## Agos by TheFrank

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To prepare for the launch of EDIUS 8 in the summer of 2015, Grass Valley, a Belden Brand, approached a number of EDIUS users around the world and asked them to create a short film to showcase their own creativity, and EDIUS as a creative tool. The only guidance given was that the project should be short (ideally less than two minutes), should appeal to a world audience and should incorporate “8” in some kind of visual or narrative way. The creative license around this “theme of 8” was left to the individual filmmaker to interpret as they saw fit.

Each month, between June and the end of 2015, we will showcase a new “Pieces of 8” project on EDIUS World ([www.EDIUSworld.com](http://www.EDIUSworld.com)) and explain the thought processes behind the work, as well as share production details. We are very pleased that we have had such a tremendous response from so many different parts of the globe — you will see works from Greece, The Philippines, Japan and Germany.



“Newfangled tech is always a seductive thing. It’s tempting to use a gazillion plugins with all the bells and whistles to put bling in your work, and there’s nothing wrong with that. But I do have to remind myself that these things (hardware and software) are just that... tools. I try to work with fewer, simpler tools as much as possible. The important thing is that they work reliably.”

TheFrank, director, editor, visual effects creator and voiceover artist, Red Ei8ht Inc.

TheFrank, otherwise known as Frank Aldana (when not talking about himself in the third-person), has been using EDIUS since 2007, when he bought a Canopus STORM XA card with EDIUS 3 bundled with it. He tried it out and never looked back. Multiple versions later, Aldana still enjoys never having to render, and the stability of EDIUS from version to version.

“EDIUS has remained rock-solid and reliable,” said Aldana. “It could be the reason why that attribute doesn’t get highlighted very much. You only notice stuff when things go sideways. Not that EDIUS never crashes, it does too, but those instances are too few and far between for it to be a problem.”

Based in the Philippines, he is the director, editor, visual effects creator and voiceover artist for Red Ei8ht Inc. It seemed only appropriate that he do a Pieces of 8 video for the launch of EDIUS 8.

“Being Filipino, I wanted to create a video that highlights my cultural heritage,” explained Aldana. “As an FMA (Filipino Martial Arts) practitioner, I thought it would be really cool to do a piece on it.”

## Background

Most people are unfamiliar with FMA, but if you’ve seen any big-budget Hollywood action film made in the past decade or so, you’ve seen FMA. The *Bourne* film series, *300*, *I Frankenstein*, *Kick-Ass*, *The Book of Eli*, *Furious 7*, *Mission: Impossible*, etc. All these films use FMA in their fight choreography.

FMA is also known as Arnis, Eskrima and Kali. There are numerous styles and systems, perhaps as numerous as there are islands in the Philippines. What sets it apart from other martial arts is that it’s a top-down weapons-based system.

“We use rattan sticks for practice in place of swords and daggers, but in essence, anything that can fit in your hand can be used as a weapon,” according to Aldana. “From there, we can transition to empty-handed fighting, joint locks and even grappling, using the same principles and biomechanics involved in weapon use.”

Wondering about the name “Agos?” It’s the Tagalog (a major language in the Philippines) word for “flow.” It is a quality that is emphasized in the particular style of FMA that Aldana practices (Isla Mandirigma Kali/Kali De Leon).

Aldana explains that techniques flow into one another in an algorithm of movement, a continuous chain of strikes. “This was something that I wanted to depict visually through VFX, and so I traced the path of the sticks with light streaks. Initially I was thinking lightsaber battle, but I wanted to give it a twist. And so the end result was less *Star Wars* and more *SoulCalibur* [a weapons-based fighting game].”



“I think there’s a lot of truth to the adage that ‘creative work is never finished, just abandoned.’ I can get obsessive sometimes, and end up splitting hairs over a one frame cut. At some point, I just have to put my foot down and say, ‘I’m done’ and let the project go. If it sucks, it sucks. I’ll just have to do better next time. It’s the only way to move forward.”

TheFrank, director, editor, visual effects creator and voiceover artist, Red Ei8ht Inc.

Visually, FMA is very fast and fluid. “I guess that’s why you see a lot of it in action films,” explains Aldana. “It’s also very flexible. Like I said, virtually anything can be used as a weapon and it opens up a lot of possibilities. The very same can be said of EDIUS 8 as an editing platform. It’s a fast, fluid, flexible NLE. Everything works in real time and it can handle just about any kind of media put in it, as well as output to any kind of media you want.”

Finding fighters for *Agos* wasn’t a problem as Aldana is very active in the FMA community. Roland Isla of IMK (Isla Mandirigma Kali) is Aldana’s and the other fighters’ instructor and fight choreographer. He studied under Ama Guro Jun De Leon, the founder of KDM (the Kali De Leon methodology). “Roland is the guy who makes sure the execution is spot-on. Techniques not only have to look good on camera, they have to be done right. He’s also the only KDM instructor operating in the Philippines. He’s very active in the local FMA community, meeting with other instructors of different systems to exchange ideas and techniques,” said Aldana.

Anne Marie Aouie, Toby Genato and Jeff Luspo are among Roland’s most advanced senior students. They’ve been with IMK-KDL from the very start. They’re serious practitioners of the art and have devoted many years (and countless welts, blisters and bruises) in its study.

“Badass as these people are, they are among the warmest, sweetest folks you’d ever get to meet. Off camera they’re all smiles and laughs — just unassuming, regular folks with kids and day jobs. It just so happens that they know how to go all Jason Bourne on you if the need arises,” jokes Aldana.

## The Shoot

*Agos* was shot at the IMK training hall in San Andres, Manila. It’s a tough-looking inner-city neighborhood. It made the camera crew a bit nervous at first, but they realized it’s relatively safe. The training hall itself was modest and unassuming. Too cramped for a Zumba class, but perfect for CQC (Close Quarter Combat) training.

“We shot on a 5D Mark III with a 70D for B-roll,” said Aldana. “We also used a GoPro for POV shots. I used a Sony RX100 as a second B-roll and BTS. We also had a mini-jib and a slider. The lighting kit was a couple of kino-flos and some blue heads. I also used a Zoom H4N and a Rode mic for field audio.

We shot everything in one day, based on the schedules of the fighters.

“Given the physical demands of staging a fight sequence, I had to limit the number of takes,” explained Aldana. “Although these guys are in great shape, I can’t have them go at it over and over again. Not only will they tire out, the execution suffers and this can lead to injuries. The speed at which those sticks move makes accuracy critical. One misstep and someone can get hit.

“When Aouie came in the day of the shoot, she had a nasty blister on her right hand. Actually, it was a blister on top of a blister. Basically, she had two layers of skin peeled off. When you see her wincing on camera, that’s for real. Being the trooper that she is, she went through with it.”





“In real life, there is no Control-Z.”

TheFrank, director, editor, visual effects creator and voiceover artist, Red Ei8ht Inc.

It was Roland’s idea to do the POV shot with the GoPro. We played around with it in the days leading up to the shoot. He had to modify his techniques (hand position, strike angle, etc.) to get the best possible shot off the GoPro. Basically, he had to use his head as a gimbal, moving independently of the rest of his body. He was also the only one tall enough to do it.”

## Cutting

“In my experience, EDIUS is still the fastest NLE to cut with,” said Aldana. “The scalability of the software has consistently kept pace with new hardware, but newer features like editing in proxy mode allows EDIUS to be used in older systems and laptops without sacrificing speed and responsiveness. Plus no other NLE allows you to change the way the timeline behaves. By toggling different options (insert, overwrite and ripple modes) you can make EDIUS behave like a different NLE all together.”

In addition to EDIUS, Aldana incorporated some VFX tools to bring some sparkle to Agos. These included After Effects CS4, Creative Dojo Extruder Script and HitFilm Ultimate

The music was done by Tris Suguitan of Cutting Edge Productions. “We’re longtime friends and collaborators,” said Aldana. “I used an audio recorder during the shoot and had Tris sample the audio of the sticks and make it part of the arrangement. There is a musicality in the practice of FMA. Whenever we do practice drills (called sinawali, which means weaving) we pay close attention to the rhythm of the sticks. It becomes our metronome and allows us to sync with one another. I wanted Tris to pick up on that and build the score around it.”

When asked if there was anything special about this project, Aldana volunteered: “My Dad died early this year, right around the time this video began taking shape. He was a machinist and an occasional blade maker. He’s the reason why I had such a fascination for weapons at an early age. I would like to dedicate this work to him.”

Aldana’s other work can be seen at:  
[www.youtube.com/user/frankaldana](http://www.youtube.com/user/frankaldana)

You can see the Agos video at:  
[www-en.ediusworld.com/pieces-of-8/agos](http://www-en.ediusworld.com/pieces-of-8/agos)