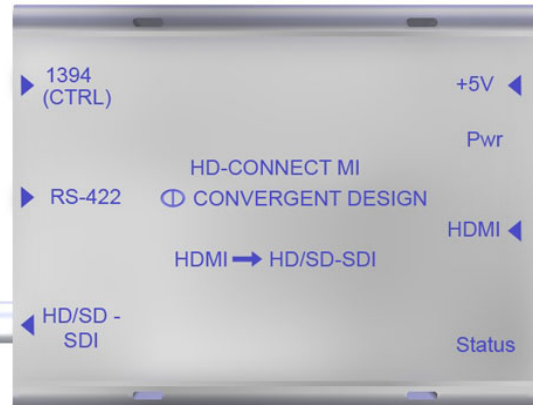


**Bob Zelin:**

**Convergent Design  
HD-Connect MI  
Converts Firewire  
to HDMI..RS-422.**



**Really? ...Yes, really!**



**Bob Zelin**  
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Orlando, FL  
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**Article Focus:**

*RSystems installer Bob Zelin torture tests every device that comes into his orbit. If he says it works in the real world, it does. If he says that it doesn't, it doesn't. He tests the Firewire to HDMI conversion feature at two Orlando facilities, as well as the Firewire to RS-422 conversion. Does the HD-Connect MI make the cut?*

Ever use a Sony HDV VTR ? I remember when Sony released the original DV VTR – the Sony DSR-11, and my first reaction was “What kind of piece of garbage is this?” Of course, Sony released the professional DSR-60 and DSR-80 soon after, which lead to the release of an entire professional DV product line from them.

SO, the Sony HVRM-10U comes out. Our first HDV VTR. Composite video output, and analog component video outputs. No deck control unless you count Firewire. The following year, I anticipated the “pro” decks. But no luck. Sony released the HVRM-15U and HVRM-25U. Editing professionals got analog HD to HD-SDI converters to get into their Avid systems, and some products from AJA and Blackmagic even took in the analog HD component signals. They were okay. They worked. But we were still unhappy.

Then a little company in Colorado called [Convergent Design](#) came out with an amazing little box. It's called the HD-Connect-MI. They had been making Firewire to SDI and Firewire to HD-SDI products, but this new one took the digital HDMI connection right off the back of the Sony HVRM-15U, Sony HVRM-25U, or JVC BR-HD50U, and turned the HDMI signal into a HD-SDI signal. They also said that they could convert the firewire VTR control port to RS422. Pretty interesting, huh?

Well, I got one of the original units, and tried it out at Golfweek TV's new facility, that uses Sony HDV extensively. We plugged it into the HDMI port of the Sony HVRM-25U, and hit the play button. OH MY GOD -- this can't be HDV! It looks AMAZING !

Now this was a beta unit from Convergent Design, and I told Golfweek that they could not keep this unit. I thought they were going to kill me if I removed this product from their facility. They had been using an analog HD component to HD-SDI converter to get into their Avid Adrenaline HD systems, and monitoring on Panasonic BT-LH2600W HD monitors, along with the Panasonic TH50 series 50" Plasma monitor. The difference in quality between using the analog converter, and the HDMI converter from Convergent Design was NIGHT AND DAY. The image quality was amazing.

How amazing? Well, no one will believe this, because I can't show you a comparison here, but the footage was from assorted country club golf courses, and you could not tell the difference between stuff shot with the Sony Z1U HDV camera and the stuff shot with much higher-end (and higher-end format) cameras. Yes, it was well lit, outdoor daylight scenes, but it was hard to believe that this was the same footage that came from the little HDV camera. HDMI makes a BIG DIFFERENCE. You've got to see it to believe it.

I have a unit installed at another corporate video facility in Orlando right now, Omni Video Productions, owned by regular COW contributor Steve Martin. Again with an Sony HVRM-25U deck, this time in an AJA Kona 3 FCP system. They also can't believe how amazing the footage from their little Sony Z1U HDV camera looks.

The problem is trying to control an HDV deck with Firewire. You can use your edit system to control the HDV VTR, but you can only do so much with their horrible little transports. The VTR plays, stops, fast forwards, and rewinds. It will cue, find the in point, and perform the edit. But you will be pulling your hair out by the time the machine cues up and actually performs the edit.

At Omni Video Productions, we got a chance to test out the RS-422 deck control feature from the Convergent Design HD Connect MI. Well, it works -- and there's really not much more to say than that. Convergent Design has done an amazing job of doing the translation to the RS-422 port.

The RS-422 VTR control is practical, just like a BetaSP UVW-1800 for example. The editors at Omni said it would still be quicker to digitize the entire HDV tape and create subclips, rather than sit there and wait for the machine to capture the logged material. But if you have your HDV VTR in a shared machine room, it's very nice to be able to at least control the HDV VTR with the RS-422 port. You can at least put it into play, and stop it for digitizing.

Sony promises to release the HVR-1500 professional HDV VTR very soon. It appears to be based on the Sony DSR-1500 DV VTR, with RS-422 control and HD-SDI out. I don't know when we will actually see this machine, and at \$7995, I don't know how many people will be willing to spend the money for it -- particularly companies that have HDV budgets to work with. For very little money (\$695 retail), the [Convergent Design HD-Connect-MI](#) takes a format that has been very aggravating to a lot of editors, and makes it into a terrific product.

*For people that use HDV VTRs with Avid, AJA, and Blackmagic products, I can't see not owning a Convergent Design HD Connect MI.*