



Cinesite adopts BlueArc Mercury and Aspera *fast* technology for high-performance storage and file transfers

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Peter Robertshaw,
Technical Services Manager, Cinesite

Summary

As one of the world’s leading visual effects houses, Cinesite is no stranger to having to store and transport enormous amounts of digital content. The company maintains state-of-the-art production facilities in London with a satellite office in Los Angeles, and produces cutting-edge visual effects for feature films. Its client base is located around the world. Cinesite’s credits include such blockbusters as *Harry Potter & the Deadly Hallows: Part 1*, *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*, the upcoming *John Carter of Mars*, and many, many more. In August of 2010, Cinesite started offering stereoscopic 3D services to its clientele.

The Challenges:

Accommodate rapid growth and improve data management of very large media files

Cinesite has up to eight highly demanding projects moving through its pipeline at any given time. Accommodating client demand for increasingly sophisticated visual effects and offering stereo 3D services required Cinesite to upgrade its existing clustered storage solution. “We were looking for a scalable system that we could grow with confidence,” Cinesite technical services manager Peter Robertshaw says. The company needed a robust storage solution capable of standing up to the enormous I/O performance and throughput demands placed on it by a staff of over 350 VFX artists that need to concurrently access thousands of files that range from a few kilobytes to hundreds of gigabytes in size. Cinesite was looking for a system that allowed them to better manage data by providing access to multi-tiered data more quickly and efficiently than its existing storage system. And above all, the company needed a storage solution it could count on 24/7 to handle the rigors of production rendering.

The Solution: A Highly Scalable, Reliable Storage Solution.

After extensive on-site testing, BlueArc Mercury 100 network attached storage systems were chosen over a number of competing storage solutions. Cinesite found that the Mercury 100s delivered superior performance, reliability, and scalability at an attractive price. Cinesite initially deployed two Mercury 100s with 96 hard disk drives. The estate has since grown to a six -Mercury 100 cluster with 118 TB of high-performance SAS storage and over 520TB of near-line SAS drives.

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Internally, Cinesite uses multiple 4Gbps network connections between its BlueArc storage and its render farm nodes, which total well over a 6000 CPU cores. It also utilises a number of 10Gbit connections between the BlueArc and the companies digital review system.

Cinesite has for a number of years been using Aspera's patented fasp high-speed transport protocol to move entire movies to its customers over public wide-area networks. For its feature film projects, the company frequently collaborates with multiple studios. In those situations, Cinesite relies on Aspera fasp technology to transport individual scenes between production facilities. "Many of our studio clients demand the use of Aspera for data transfers. This is as a result of its ability to give more assured transfer speeds across what is a worldwide public network. Of course in that arena the use of 128-bit AES encryption is also of paramount importance and Aspera delivers all this. The fact that Aspera does get the best out of what bandwidth is available tends to mean that it is the fastest medium for getting large volumes of data around the world.

Summary

Cinesite has been delighted with the product that BlueArc has provided. It has evolved quickly and painlessly from its initial deployment to its current size and it has scaled to meet the demands of the significant ramp up in both artist workstation and render core count.

About BlueArc

At BlueArc, we know that lightning fast storage is the accelerator to your driving great visual results. In media and entertainment, we deliver stop watch metrics: reducing rendering times from hours to minutes, and file access times from minutes to seconds. In CGI development, quality and speed are vital. BlueArc lets artists create more revisions and dramatically speeds render farm output fueling extraordinary productions on schedule while reducing costs. BlueArc's Storage solutions scale with your digital workflow and BlueArc's tiered storage enables a more cost effective digital workflow. Scale Bigger, Store Smarter, and Accelerate Everything.

About Aspera

Aspera is the creator of next-generation transport technologies that move the world's digital assets at maximum speed regardless of file size, transfer distance and network conditions. Based on its patented fasp™ protocol, Aspera software fully utilizes existing infrastructures to deliver the fastest, most predictable file transfer experience. Aspera's core technology delivers unprecedented control over bandwidth, complete security and uncompromising reliability. About one thousand organizations across a variety of industries on six continents rely on Aspera software for the business-critical transport of their digital assets.

For more information

- www.asperasoft.com
- www.bluearc.com
- www.cinesite.com



BlueArc Corporation
Corporate Headquarters
50 Rio Robles
San Jose, CA 95134
t 408 576 6600
f 408 576 6601
www.bluearc.com

BlueArc UK Ltd.
European Headquarters
Queensgate House
Cookham Road
Bracknell RG12 1RB, United Kingdom
t +44 (0) 1344 408 200
f +44 (0) 1344 408 202