



For France's pioneering digital post-production studio, the pursuit of high performance leads to BlueArc

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Pierre Billet,
Operations Manager, Duran Duboi Studio

Summary

The shift to digital post-production is changing the rules of the game in the film, television, animation and special effects industries. Post-production studios need to have bulletproof technology, in particular the latest advances in high-performance network storage. It's not just a matter of having the right technology on hand to do the work: It's also about having technology that will inspire the confidence of the production companies and film studios that assign the most exciting, innovative and groundbreaking projects. For France's pioneering Duran Duboi Studio, the opportunity to create an entire animated 3D film also created an opportunity to look at upgrading their storage infrastructure to support higher performance, greater capacity and an increased utilization of virtualization. Working with a trusted storage integrator, Duran Duboi turned to network storage solutions from BlueArc to address its technological challenges. The result: A solution that has enabled Duran Duboi to be four times more efficient while using half the physical space and energy consumption.

The Company

Duran Duboi Studio is widely recognized as a pioneer in the digital audio-visual post-production industry, with specialization in 3D animation and visual effects. The company, based in France, has state-of-the-art facilities in Paris, Issy and Boulogne and boasts a roster of credits that includes up to 250 feature films, 750 television dramas and hundreds of commercials and music videos. Founded in 1984, Duran Duboi Studio is now part of the Quinta Industries Group.

The Challenge

Duran Duboi had the opportunity to take on the challenge of creating an entire animated 3D film, called “La Mécanique du Coeur” (“The Boy With the Cuckoo-Clock Heart”). 3D production creates significant demands for storage, both in volume and in the need for extremely fast speed, high availability and high performance. At the same time, Duran Duboi's production requirements throughout the studio were growing significantly and its existing storage solution was not keeping pace. It needed a state-of-the-art storage solution and turned to Newnet SA, a leading French integrator that had supplied storage solutions to Duran Duboi for several years. Newnet specializes in building storage solutions for the media and entertainment market. Newnet was able to recognize the challenges facing Duran Duboi for capacity, performance, high availability and scalability and it recommended a network storage solution from BlueArc.

The Solution

“Having reliable, high-performance storage technology is a key element in the post-production of films and digital videos,” says Pierre Billet, operations manager at Duran Duboi Studio. “From the perspective of post-production, going entirely digital means that all of the materials are stored and transferred to disks. In the past, post-production techniques required expensive assembly stations combined with small, direct-connection storage islands. All that has now been replaced by a centralized shared storage system and standard computers running high-performance software. There are two elements that heighten storage problems in digital post-production: (1) the number of users of the systems and (2) the number of processing machines and, consequently, the need for an intensive processing bank.”

For Duran Duboi the explosive growth of digital post-production meant corresponding growth in data and storage requirements: From 80 workstations to 150 workstations; from about 1000 processing cores to about 3000 cores; and from active memory of 50 terabytes to active memory of more than 200 terabytes. The solution to these storage challenges has been a BlueArc Mercury 100 cluster storage system with Mercury 50 replication from Newnet. “We had a need for availability and flexibility,” says Billet. “In the post production of films, storage is a key element, affecting aspects that are functional, technological and also involving human resources.” Choosing BlueArc was a no-brainer, according to Philippe Neel, founder and President of Newnet. “There has been a big difference with the BlueArc solution: It is much more user oriented and simpler to manage than the previous solution. It’s the best solution in the market in terms of the man/machine interface.”

The Results

Duran Duboi Studio has been able to see immediate results of the upgrade to BlueArc. “From our perspective it has the best administrative interface on the market,” Billet says. “It has excellent ergonomics and is extremely logical and intuitive, providing direct access to resources. It is an approach to storage management developed for the user and we are achieving human time savings in administering the system.” The BlueArc has also enabled Duran Duboi to take advantage of increased virtualization of servers and, according to Billet, allows the organization to quickly migrate resources internally, in terms of both volumes and performance levels. “The BlueArc system has allowed us to be four times more

efficient, using half the physical space and energy consumption,” Billet says. “This is a system that inspires confidence. In the digital post-production market the tools of the trade are becoming industrialized and standardized and BlueArc is a part of that evolution.”

Another advantage of having the BlueArc networking storage solution in place is the confidence it gives Duran Duboi in expanding its business. “As part of our development plans we wanted outreach to the U.S. market,” Billet says. “The U.S. is more demanding in terms of high-quality processes and work methods. They use checklists to verify the compliance of their suppliers’ infrastructures and tools. Standards are being developed: For example, Maya for 3D, Shotgun for assets management. In hardware, BlueArc is beginning to be a strong symbol of quality in terms of choice of equipment. It’s important for our customers to know that we have BlueArc.”

The Conclusion

The most immediate impact of having the BlueArc storage solution in place is the ability for Duran Duboi to extend its business into animated films. “The huge project affecting our production pipeline is ‘The Boy with the Cuckoo-Clock Heart,’ produced by EuropaCorp.,” Billet says. “This phase truly represents a new stage in the development of Duran Duboi, extending our business into animated films. This is the first time an entire film is being done and this is why we decided to upgrade our storage infrastructure.” Billet is pleased to offer some of the credit, at least in the area of technology, to its partners BlueArc and Newnet. “With the changeover of systems, Newnet as a supplier and support provider continues to assist us. They are serious, efficient and reliable, with clear and transparent communication,” Billet says. “If we could sum up our goals simply, it would be this: The pursuit of high performance!”

For more information

- www.bluearc.com
- www.newnet.fr

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Philippe Neel,
Founder & President, NEWNET



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