

StorNext Series

StorNext at Heart of Post-Production Revamp for Customized Car Show

When West Coast Customs remodels a car for one of its wildly popular reality shows, the team is on top of every detail. With the post-production process outsourced to London, that same level of control over editing was not always possible—until they adopted an end-to-end workflow leveraging Quantum StorNext.

OFFSITE PROCESS HAMPERS QUALITY CONTROL

West Coast Customs, a renowned Southern California car customization shop founded and owned by Ryan Friedlinghaus, has been the site for multiple hit TV reality shows, including *Pimp My Ride*, *Street Customs*, and *Inside West Coast Customs*. Its current show, *West Coast Customs*, airs on the Fox Sports network.

Even though the goal at West Coast Customs is to do everything in-house—from body work to interiors to painting to filming the shows—the post-production process was handled in London and elsewhere by external production companies until recently.

“Ryan’s whole philosophy is to keep everything under one roof,” says Kara Stephens, Producer at KOC Productions. “That way we can make sure it all gets done the way we want it. But we had a number of different companies that produced the show in the past, so we didn’t really have the level of quality control that we wanted.”

Once the film was shipped off to London or other facilities for post-production, the team at West Coast Customs no longer had access to the raw footage. This was particularly frustrating when the team had to address the needs of sponsors, create promotional clips, and deal with product placements. Everything took more time, and communications were hampered by distance and time differences.

“The post-production house would have to upload our footage, and then when we wanted to check what they had done, we would have to download it,” Stephens says. “If we wanted to talk to an editor about making a change, we’d have to plan in

advance and do it really early because of the time difference. It was very difficult.”

The solution, West Coast Customs decided, was to bring the post-production process in-house. However, that required building a post-production infrastructure from scratch.

PAST CONNECTIONS MADE CHOICE EASY

West Coast Customs already had an established relationship with Hewlett Packard when Stephens went looking for the best solutions for creating a post-production operation.

“The whole relationship with HP came about during season one of *Inside West Coast Customs* when we turned a GMC Denali into a mobile media platform with all of the latest HP technology,” she says. “From that, we had developed a good relationship with HP—plus our people were already doing renderings on HP workstations.”

Combining the latest “incredibly fast” HP workstations with HP servers and storage just seemed to make sense, according to Stephens. In addition, she knew she wanted to use Avid Technology as her editing platform, but was less enthusiastic about the large investment required to use the company’s ISIS storage system for file sharing.

Instead, she turned to Quantum’s StorNext®—as she put it, “a setup that makes Avid do what it does best: allow a tapeless workflow between computers.” Working with partners at HP, West Coast Customs soon had figured out a solution that relied on HP hardware (an HP P2000 G3 storage array, HP ProLiant servers, and an HP StorEver



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Kara Stephens

Producer, KOC Productions

SOLUTION OVERVIEW

- Quantum StorNext File System with Distributed LAN Clients
- HP P2000 G3 modular smart storage array
- HP Z820 Workstations (Windows 7) and HP ProLiant DL380 servers (Red Hat) Linux
- HP StorEver MSL4048 tape library with LTO-5 drives
- HP-branded QLogic FC Switch with I/O StreamGuard
- ATTO Celerity HBAs
- AVID Media Composer
- Strawberry FlavourSys software

KEY BENEFITS

- Enables quick response to post-production edits
- Provides shared access to digital files by editors using AVID
- Operates in a heterogeneous environment without shuttling content back and forth
- Works seamlessly without IT intervention

tape library with LTO-5 drives) and Quantum's StorNext software, ATTO Celerity HBAs, as well as QLogic SAN switches. West Coast Customs also deployed FlavourSys' Strawberry software solution to allow Avid editors to share project folders.

Working as both the solutions provider and systems integrator, HP oversaw the architecture, design, deployment, and knowledge transfer that got the West Coast Customs crew up and running.

INSTANT ACCESS AND COLLABORATION

The benefits to West Coast Customs are obvious but not easy to quantify since post-production used to be handled by a different company. But Stephens has no doubt that creativity, collaboration, and timely performance have all increased.

"We have the ease of having everything in one spot and any workstation can access that data," she says. "So much of the footage overlaps from job to job that I can't really say how much time it saves, but if we didn't have HP and StorNext, we would be shuttling footage back and forth and uploading and downloading all of the time."

In the past, it was particularly problematic when a hard drive used as a shuttle would fail, particularly if there were no backups for the footage. And as the hard drives aged, the whole process became slower and slower.

"This is a much more stable system, and I'm very comfortable with our data protection," Stephens says. "In fact, the tape system has saved our lives. We had two master drives at one point before we put anything into the HP system and one failed. And then the technician accidentally reformatted the other drive instead of a new one. We would have lost everything, but we had it all backed up on tape."

Now with the full HP/Quantum solution installed, footage can be ingested once, backed up on the tape system, and be ready for shared access. Stephens offers an example of why shared access is critical:

"We are doing several separate builds right now—three separate documentaries for the same episode, five teasers, and two commercials that will all use the same footage," she explains. "We can have different assistants and editors pulling from the entire pool of footage to do one project and then another. We definitely have to have 'shareability' and StorNext gives us that."

Stephens adds that the reliability and ease-of-use of StorNext are particularly important.

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ABOUT WEST COAST CUSTOMS

West Coast Customs has grown into one of the most powerful and recognized brand names in the custom automotive industry. The company has franchises stretching across the world and a range of ventures across various media platforms. A household name in multiple countries through several reality TV shows, the company plans to continue growing and dominating the custom car world and expanding its global reach with amazing rides and concepts.

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