

Milk

*Revolutionizing visual effects with reliable,
high-speed production*

Overview

The need

To continue to create award-winning visual effects (vfx) while keeping control over IT costs, Milk needed a more cost-sustainable approach to scaling up the storage capacity of its vfx systems.

The solution

Working with Pixit Media, an IBM Business Partner, Milk deployed a PixStor and IBM® Spectrum Scale™ storage solution offering extreme scalability and performance for vfx production.

The benefit

Supports cost-sustainable data-intensive vfx projects. Faster vfx production through concurrent file access. Easier admin, no downtime when adding capacity, no loss of performance as data volumes grow.

Milk is an award-winning, independent visual effects company based in London, UK. The Milk team has created vfx for major movies and television series including Sherlock, Snow White and the Huntsman, and Doctor Who. In 2014, the company received the prestigious BAFTA Television Craft Award.

Creating complex, high-definition vfx for leading television and movie studios requires significant computing power and the ability to store increasingly large volumes of data. As Milk CEO Will Cohen explains, the costs are high: “The vfx industry has traditionally relied upon proprietary technology at premium prices. This meant that increasing vfx capacity was an expensive business requiring the addition of extra clusters of capacity.”

So that it could continue to delight clients with leading-edge vfx while controlling its own costs, Milk needed a more sustainable approach to managing and growing its data storage infrastructure.



Solution components

Software

- IBM® Spectrum Scale™ (based on IBM General Parallel File System)
- PixStor from Pixit Media

IBM Business Partner

- Pixit Media
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Scaling up to client needs

Working with Pixit Media, an IBM Business Partner specialized in enterprise-class storage solutions for the post-production and broadcast industries, Milk deployed a PixStor system with IBM Spectrum Scale, a proven high-performance data and file management solution based on IBM General Parallel File System (GPFS™). With Spectrum Scale on commodity hardware, Milk gained a flexible, scalable and cost-effective storage landscape, and can now add storage capacity without downtime.

“It makes the installation and upgrading of vfx storage much more flexible and much more cost effective,” says Cohen.

Dave Goodbourn, Head of Systems at Milk, adds: “The technology can concurrently handle large amounts of data with no log-jams. It can also address an almost unlimited number of clients, giving clients like Milk the ability to rapidly scale up operations.”

Delivering leading-edge vfx at lower cost

By deploying PixStor and IBM Spectrum Scale, Milk has gained the ability to stay at the cutting-edge of digital vfx while containing its storage costs. Spectrum Scale supports concurrent file access from multiple users with no performance bottlenecks, enhancing team productivity and accelerating the production of high-quality vfx. For TV and movie clients working to tight production deadlines, Milk’s ability to reliably deliver cutting-edge work on time is a huge benefit. From Milk’s point of view, the Pixit Media and IBM solution enables it to delight its clients with extremely sophisticated vfx, while simultaneously controlling storage costs even as data volumes continue to grow.

Storage at the speed of creativity

Goodbourn stresses that the PixStor and IBM solution’s “architecture really fits the deadline-driven nature of vfx. With most types of storage-based solutions, as you reach around 80 percent of capacity, performance rapidly tails off, but with PixStor this just doesn’t happen.”

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Milk has used the solution in production on the BBC’s Doctor Who Christmas Special and Sherlock, Sky/Atlantic’s David Attenborough Natural History Museum Adventure—shot in 3D—and the movie Hercules.

“Everything is put into one storage system—there are no separate SANs for edit and grading—with everything in one place but organized into separate pools,” says Goodbourn. PixStor with Spectrum Scale supports a global namespace; for Milk, a single global namespace for data spreads the load, enabling vfx applications such as Autodesk’s Maya and editorial playback applications such as Adobe Premiere or Foundry’s Hiero to be run from within the same workspace, removing the need for costly additional SANs.

Greater agility from IBM SDI

The industry-leading IBM Spectrum Scale software is a core offering in the IBM Platform Computing Software Defined Infrastructure (SDI) solution portfolio. SDI solutions include infrastructure management software that enables greater infrastructure agility, efficiency, and cost savings for clients of all sizes in all industries—both on-premise and in the cloud. With SDI, clients can transform operating silos into shared services environments with priority-based workload and resource management for improved IT scalability, utilization, and service levels. SDI is targeted for both high performance computing (HPC) and new generation of digital workloads.

Take the next step

To learn more about IBM SDI including Spectrum Scale software, contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: ibm.com/software-defined-infrastructure

To find out more about Pixit Media, please visit the following website: www.pixitmedia.com



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