

# Modern VideoFilm

## CASE STUDY



### Modern VideoFilm accelerates high-volume post-production workflow with Harmonic MediaGrid storage

#### The Challenge

Modern VideoFilm, a feature film and television post-production company based in Burbank, Calif., has been a leader in the post-production business for three decades. As the industry has grown and evolved, so too have operations at Modern VideoFilm, where movies and TV shows from content providers are received, prepared and redistributed for leading Web portals and delivered to networks for mass distribution over the Web, satellite, cable or air.

The high volume of content processed at Modern VideoFilm made it essential that the company adopt an easy-to-manage storage system that could deliver high performance, scale simply with virtually no limits and offer extremely high reliability. While many post-production facilities with similar requirements use an expensive and complex Fibre Channel SAN (storage area network) from one vendor and a shared file system from another, Modern VideoFilm sought a storage system with the simplicity of NAS (network attached storage) and the performance of a SAN. The company also required that this system be able to handle the high incoming rate (up to 10 TB/day) of files being transferred in from the studios, support editing at high bit rates, transcode efficiently and QC (quality control) the content at a very fast rate before distributing the files to another set of clients.

*“MediaGrid was the only solution we found that could cost-effectively support multiple high-bandwidth streams at speeds high enough not to impact clients’ loading of projects,”*

**Bill Womack**  
Modern VideoFilm Senior Engineer

#### SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

##### CHALLENGE:

Modern VideoFilm needed a storage solution that could provide SAN-like performance, as well as the simplicity of NAS and Ethernet, in enabling the facility to receive and process a high volume of content from content providers before delivering it to their customers. The company also required storage that could be scaled on the fly to meet unexpected demands.

##### SOLUTION:

Over the past three years, Modern VideoFilm has deployed Harmonic MediaGrid systems totaling more than 750 TB in raw capacity.

##### APPLICATIONS:

- Ingest and transcoding with Digital Rapids and Amberfin
- Editing with Final Cut Pro
- High-performance cache for Signiant and Aspera file transfers
- Archival cache for Atempo

After a rigorous evaluation of several storage solutions on the market, Modern VideoFilm chose the Harmonic MediaGrid active storage system. The company found the MediaGrid system to be a high-performance storage solution that could use cost-effective Ethernet connectivity, perform better than SANs, interoperate smoothly with preferred applications and scale easily while remaining online.

## The Solution and Workflow

Over the past three years, Modern VideoFilm has installed two MediaGrid systems at its Burbank facility and two MediaGrid systems at its Scottsdale, Arizona, facility. A 38-node MediaGrid in Burbank serves as an incoming and outgoing cache for content both delivered to and distributed from the facility via Signiant software over a fiber network. Clients upload episodics or features at the rate of about 10 TB per day to this MediaGrid system. It is the target destination for multiple-format masters from studios delivered over 1- and 2-Gbps fiber connections. Once those files have arrived, Signiant servers also move them to a 12-node MediaGrid system dedicated for production.

This second MediaGrid is used heavily for editing with 10 Apple Final Cut Pro systems; transcoding on Digital Rapids, Final Cut Pro or Amberfin systems; and automated technical quality verification. Modern VideoFilm also uses the second MediaGrid to support direct playback of material for the FOX network. Amberfin directories on the storage system enable file management and streaming to FOX, thereby eliminating the need to move files to another system prior to delivery. Given the time savings involved, the integration of the MediaGrid system with Amberfin was a huge benefit.

Once files are finished and ready for delivery to the client, they are registered in the appropriate directory and automatically moved by the Signiant Manager software back to the first MediaGrid. From there, files are sent out to 60 Signiant Agents at locations all across the world, including iTunes, television stations and network operations centers. The performance of the two MediaGrid systems in Burbank, in conjunction with Signiant software, enables Modern VideoFilm to create and deliver more than 300 programs and features daily for various networks and service providers.

Following on the success of the Burbank installation, Modern VideoFilm deployed two additional MediaGrid systems into a new Scottsdale facility engineered primarily for receiving and archiving a leading studio's episodic content. In this implementation an 18-node MediaGrid system provides cache storage for Atempo's Digital Archive application and Quantum tape library and storage for transcoding of master files from the studio's digital library to the appropriate delivery formats via Amberfin. A second MediaGrid system is deployed as a source volume for an Aspera delivery system.

## The Result

"MediaGrid was the only solution we found that could cost-effectively support multiple high-bandwidth streams at speeds high enough not to impact clients' loading of projects," says Modern VideoFilm Senior Engineer Bill Womack. "It is extremely easy to scale, and we have been doing that for the past three years of MediaGrid usage at Modern."

For both Modern VideoFilm facilities, Harmonic MediaGrid systems provide reliable, scalable storage along with the high bandwidth necessary for fast media access and with the power and interoperability necessary to stream a high volume of episodes simultaneously to clients. By delivering these benefits and allowing Modern VideoFilm to employ an Ethernet network for media transfers, the MediaGrid systems also help the company to keep its cost of ownership down. This model also makes for cost-effective expansion of post-production operations.

The SAN-like performance of the MediaGrid systems over Ethernet gives editors the speed of access with which they are familiar, and reliability that reduces the time and cost of maintenance by IT staff. With agility in handling an enormous volume of content, Modern VideoFilm is better equipped to fulfill existing contracts and to take on new clients and projects. With the capacity to do more work more efficiently, the company is positioned to realize a relatively rapid return on its investment.