

Case Study

Levels Audio Post

Audio post production for film and television

Industry: Entertainment



LEVELS
audio



The Company

Levels Audio Post has provided post-production sound design for some of America's best-known reality TV series, including American Idol (Fox), Extreme Makeover: Home Edition (ABC), The Bachelor (ABC), Grease: You're the One that I Want (NBC), and So You Think You Can Dance (FOX). In their state-of-the-art production facility, they couple industry-leading talent and cutting-edge technology to help them deliver Emmy-nominated sound.

The Environment

- Macintosh® clients
- Connecting over AFP
- 1.2 Terrabyte Library of Audio Files
- T1 line with cable
- Netgear® Gigabit Ethernet
- Soundminer Audio File Management System

The Challenge

As a pioneer in the post-production audio industry, Levels wants to maintain its edge and continue delivering award-winning sound production to its clients. With multiple active mixing suites, they required a reliable storage appliance with unwavering performance in file serving.

"We have up to seven different audio production rooms accessing the same files simultaneously. We needed a storage device that could handle the throughput and quickly deliver up the sound bits we need during very intense editing sessions," explains Adrian Ordonez, Re-recording Sound Mixer and Editor.

Additionally, Levels needed a dedicated backup solution for their library of audio files as well as their current projects and archived pieces. Recognizing their data as a cornerstone of their business, Levels required Network Attached Storage (NAS) with the safety of hardware RAID (Redundant Array of Independent Disks).

"It was important for us to have hardware RAID – to have that additional safety feature. We had been using independent firewire disk drives attached to our laptops. Not only is it time consuming, it carries with it the risk of hardware failure," says Ordonez.

Why Levels Audio chose ReadyNAS

- ❖ Fast File Sharing
- ❖ Dedicated Backup
- ❖ RAID
- ❖ Easy Deployment

About Levels Audio Post

Founded in 1998, Levels Audio Post specializes in music production, sound design and audio post-production primarily for television music, reality and awards shows. Founder, Brian Riordan pioneered a new concept in post production - the HD Super-Boutique, offering high-definition audio production and design services to a wide range of high-profile clients including HBO, ABC, CBS, CMT, ESPN, FOX, NBC, MTV, SHOWTIME, VH-1 and the WB.

Located in the heart of Hollywood, in a state-of-the-art facility, Levels combines the industry's finest talent with the best technology equipment available. Since 2003, Levels Audio has received 5 Primetime Emmy Nominations for Outstanding Sound Mixing – four for FOX's American Idol and one for the 76th Academy awards in 2004.

Levels Audio Post
www.levelsaudio.com
Hollywood, California

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The Solution

ReadyNAS™ NV

After evaluating the other storage options on the market, Levels selected the ReadyNAS NV for several reasons.

Easy Setup and Deployment

The primary reason that Levels chose ReadyNAS is because of its plug-and-play design. Without a dedicated IT staff, Levels needed a solution that was easy to install, administer and maintain. With its plug-and-play deployment and user friendly graphical web interface, ReadyNAS removes the traditional complexity associated with network storage.

“The ReadyNAS user interface is amazingly easy to use. It provides really easy tutorials explaining my options so that I don’t have spend much time administering it and maintaining it – I get to focus on my editing work,” notes Ordenez.

Levels had their ReadyNAS up and running in no time and the automatic system monitoring and email alerts gave them the peace of mind that the appliance would notify them of any complications or failures. This gave them more time to do what they are best at – creating unmatched sound mixing.

Fast File Sharing and Backup

Levels wanted to keep the file serving and the backup as separate functions. Because ReadyNAS is cost-effective, they determined that two units would allow them to use one ReadyNAS as the file server and the other for backup in their data center.

As the file server, ReadyNAS stores the 1.2 TB of sound effects and works with Soundminer Audio File Management Software™ to quickly and accurately locate and deliver the sound bytes. With its ability to handle multiple high-definition audio files simultaneously, ReadyNAS helps give the producers the edge they need to produce timely quality editing.

Fast File Sharing and Backup

The added data security of RAID 5— a feature usually reserved for high-end servers, was an important part of Levels decision to purchase ReadyNAS.

“ReadyNAS stood out in the crowd of storage options in its class. It was the most cost-effective way to do hardware RAID 5 for the amount of data we have” says Ordenez.

With RAID 5, the data is arrayed across all four disks of the ReadyNAS and a parity block is created. The parity block is what checks the accuracy of the data stores and protects the data in case of failure. In other words, if one of the hard disks fails, the data can still be completely recovered and the system rebuilt based on the three surviving hard disk drives. With ReadyNAS, configured to RAID 5, during a single disk failure, Levels needs only to hot-swap the failed drive with a functioning drive and the ReadyNAS will automatically rebuild the volumes. Without it, Levels would be faced with the loss of their business-critical audio files. Try explaining that to the audience of American Idol.

Summary

As an industry leader in audio mixing and post-production, Levels Audio Post chose NETGEAR ReadyNAS NV, as their storage solution. With 1.2 TB of audio files that needed to be shared among multiple editing and mixing sessions, Levels needed a solution that delivered high-performance file serving capabilities and had the ability to provide a backup solution complete with hardware RAID. With native AFP support and easy deployment, ReadyNAS was able to fit quickly and seamlessly into their Macintosh environment. ReadyNAS helps Levels maintain their edge in delivering quality post-production sound mixing.

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