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Laika's huge data needs for *ParaNorman*

PORTLAND, OR — As the scope and complexity of animated motion pictures escalates to satisfy hungrier and hungrier audiences, film companies face massive data challenges. During Laika studio's production and post production of the Oscar-nominated *Coraline*, the studio faced a need to expand quickly and to considerably upgrade its storage capacity.

Laika and Focus Features, responsible for *Coraline*, are re-teaming for Laika's next two projects: The first of the duo, *ParaNorman*, will be released nationwide in August, 2012.

Following *Coraline*, *ParaNorman*, directed by Sam Fell and Chris Butler, is currently only the second stop-motion animated feature to be made in 3D. In the comedy thriller, a small town comes under siege by zombies and calls on misunderstood local boy Norman, who is able to speak with the dead.

DATA CENTER NEEDS

With one facility in Portland and another 20 miles away in Hillsboro, and its second

needs to increase artist collaboration and accelerate project completion.

"IMT designed our new data centers and helped us through that complex implementation process," explains Jonathan Rozes, director of IT at Laika (www.laika.com). "Our most critical asset is the animation and CG artists, and the more iterations they can get in a fixed period of time, the better the film looks and the better it is for the studio. IMT understood the sensitivity and pressure of any kind of disruption, and got everything set up quickly and made the transition as seamless as possible."

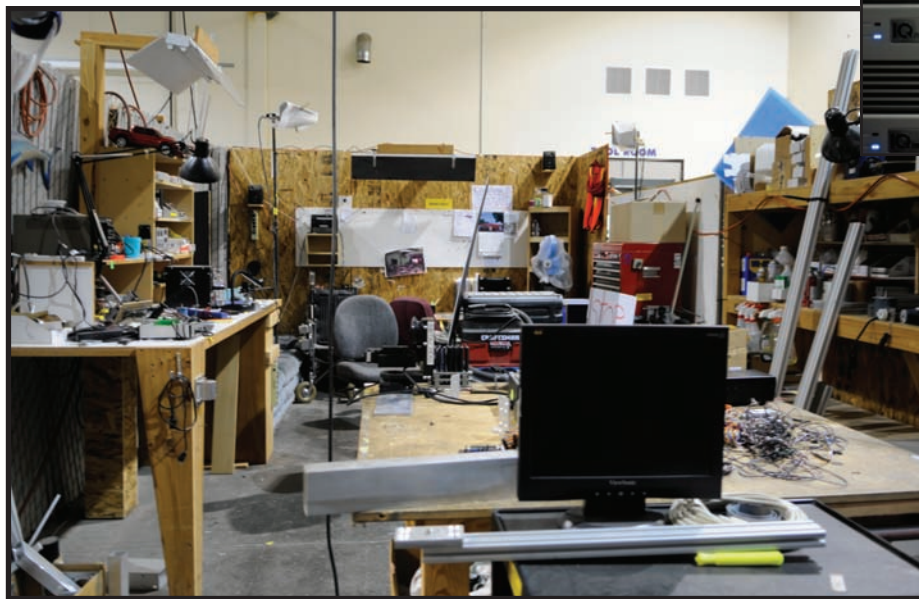
Owned by Nike co-founder/chairman Philip H. Knight, Laika features two divisions: Laika's Entertainment division, which produces animated feature films and shorts, and Laika/house, the commercial division behind animated campaigns for Frito Lay, M&Ms and Planters. Prior to Isilon, Laika's traditional NAS system segregated its range of workflows across dis-

"We need our artists focused on the creative process, not waiting for render jobs to finish or content to migrate, so a single, shared storage resource that can accommodate a range of access patterns and performance requirements is a game-changer for us," explains Rozes. "Before Isilon, we had to manage our workflows separately, which made management a hassle and limited our productivity. By moving to Isilon, we've consolidated our entire production operation on one, simple solution, which not only minimized management, but helped expand our bandwidth for new projects."

Laika deployed three tiers of Isilon scale-out NAS — the high-performance 5400S for its IOPS-intensive compositing workflow, the 10000X-SSD for metadata-intensive



Jonathan Rozes (one of the Hillsboro workshops is inset): "We need our artists focused on the creative process, not waiting for render jobs to finish or content to migrate..."



This studio prepares for its next 3D stereo job.

much-anticipated animated feature already in pre-production, Laika didn't want to change course and invest in an expanded brick-and-mortar data center. Instead, they called on Integrated Media Technologies (IMT) to design and implement two portable 20-foot storage containers to house all of its new data transfer and storage solutions.

As a result, Laika has deployed more than a Petabyte of EMC Isilon scale-out NAS as the primary storage platform for its end-to-end animation and computer graphics workflow, simplifying its huge data management

parate file systems, complicating management, slowing application performance and limiting artist collaboration.

THE SET-UP

Working with IMT and using Isilon's SmartPools software application, Laika has unified three performance tiers into a single file system, consolidating its compositing, computer graphics and stop-motion workflows onto a single, shared storage resource, streamlining production operations and improving IT efficiency.

computer graphics apps, and the 12000X for highly concurrent stop-motion effects.

Using SmartPools, Laika has simplified management to less than one full-time equivalent (FTE) and unified all of its production operations on a single, shared pool of storage. Additionally, using Isilon's NL-Series in combination with its asynchronous replication application SyncIQ, Laika can backup its projects to a secure, reliable off-site cluster, ensuring maximum data availability and business continuity in the event of data loss or disaster.

"IMT has an excellent understanding of the feature film industry, and animation in particular," adds Rozes. "After we evaluated competitive proposals, IMT asked the most intelligent questions and came up with a solution that was the best fit for us," says Rozes. "The fact that they decided to go with Isilon was a reflection of their knowledge of the industry and what our needs were." ■ **POST**