

## Workflow, collaboration and flexibility

**S**onic Magic Studios, a premiere boutique post production facility located in Culver City, CA, specializes in delivering incredible soundtracks for small feature films, television series, commercials and major Hollywood movies.

To provide the very best and most flexible service, the company operates one of the most technologically advanced facilities of its kind in the world. They pioneered fully-centralized production networking in a small facility and currently maintain over 130 Terabytes of backed-up, secure storage.

Sonic Magic operates two mixing stages, supplemented by two ADR (Additional Dialogue Recording) stages. A Foley recording stage enables highly experienced sound artists to record the highest quality of sound effects from a vast quantity of on-site props. The stages are supported by a suite of nine Media Composer rooms and several sound editing rooms.

The corporate philosophy is that the true function of technology is to serve the creative process. Consequently an environment has been built that incorporates the very latest state-of-the-art equipment around a centralized production network infrastructure leveraging fibre channel and high-speed Ethernet backbones to their full potential. At its core is an Avid ISIS 5000 central storage system, combined with an enterprise-grade Cisco and Q-Logic switching infrastructure and ISIS, XSAN2 and FibreJet Storage Area Networks.

To provide the most efficient use of the sound stages, studios and equipment, the IHSE Draco tera KVM switch has recently been adopted to provide interconnection between any production system and any workstation, anywhere in the building; allowing operators to connect and work where it is most convenient to them, rather than be tethered to a dedicated location. This, in turn frees up studios and control rooms leading to more efficient working.

“Before adopting the IHSE solution, the technical team considered alternative systems, including IP-based solutions, but found the inherent switching latency of 2–3 seconds to be too great, resulting in user frustration over the course of a day,” explains Jonathan Wales, CEO: “The Draco tera was selected because it provides instantaneous switching. With nine or ten systems in use at any time, changing between them can be completed with no delay; without skipping a frame. The IHSE switch was the only one that offered the level of quality required: true video with 1:1 mapping; and offered the best video quality by far.”

The deployment of the KVM switch throughout the facility has provided a revolution in the method of operation: it provides all-digital, original video quality that shows no degradation and allows flexible deployment of single and multiple monitor situations. Jonathan: “Operators are not tied to desks; it delivers full production-quality digital audio through the KVM system so the audio feed switches alongside video with no perceivable delay. Remote extensions can be located in the most convenient position, divorced from hardware; so that the number of monitors is related to the number of users, not systems. There is no perceivable difference in video quality, mouse performance or display frame rate. It feels like being directly attached to your computer.”

### Define: KVM matrix switch

The KVM (Keyboard Video Mouse) matrix switch provides a method of accessing computers remotely over a copper or fibre network, allowing workstations to be independent of their sources. The latest versions support up to 288 ports with any configuration of inputs and outputs. Features include instantaneous switching, zero latency, USB support and artefact-free images. Pre-stored configurations allow frequently-used setups to be instantly recalled.

System installation was carried out whilst the facility was still operating with minimal disruption to workflow. While the switch was being installed, the installation team simply connected users directly to machines on a 1:1 basis using the same extender units that were later used with the switch. Users were then routed through the switch after installation. Total disruption was less than five minutes during the changeover.

To provide the greatest level of operational flexibility, Sonic Magic manages signal routing across the network with a web interface GUI. Pre-stored configurations and easy access switch connections mean that the system administrator can change the use of a studio instantly, so studio down-time is kept to an absolute minimum.

A high level of system security is provided by the system, which is crucial in the film industry. The switch requires users to log-in before anyone and has integral recording of activities. Connections can be controlled to prevent unauthorised access to servers and the use of flash memory sticks prevented.

The current installation provides a highly efficient and effective workflow, as Jonathan summarises: “Everything here serves a purpose; to enable us to deliver the very best results possible in the most flexible and comfortable surroundings.”

[www.sonicmagic.net](http://www.sonicmagic.net) | [www.ihse.de](http://www.ihse.de)

