

BLACK BOX®

CASE STUDY
BROADCASTING

Untapping the Future of Hollywood Post Production with Black Box KVM Solutions

New high-performance KVM system removes limitations and unleashes future opportunities

- **Industry:** Post Production
- **Client:** Chainsaw
- **Region:** North America
- **Solution:** KVM Matrix Switch
- **Products:** DKM FX KVM Matrix Switching Platform



BACKGROUND

Based in the heart of Hollywood, Chainsaw is a post-production haven for nearly every type of project that comes out of the feature film and television industries. The company offers offline editorial, editorial finishing, and color grading services for studios and producers. Acclaimed dramas like Game of Thrones, reality series such as America's Got Talent, award shows like The Oscars and movies such as The Boondock Saints have all relied on Chainsaw's top-of-the-line post-production facilities.

THE CHALLENGE

With the quickly changing and demanding media landscape inherent to the industry, Chainsaw's legacy KVM system had reached its limitations, making it difficult to keep pace with the ever-growing demands of clients.

The first issue is with the network itself. The old system used a copper backbone. This traditional copper cabling required too much space, lacked the ability to accommodate cutting-edge applications and lacked the security television and feature-length movie producers rely on when creating their product.

The second issue was that the existing system had reached its limits in scalability and ability to adapt to evolving industry needs. It had been deployed for so long that it had end-of-life transmitters and receivers that couldn't be expanded any further. It had gotten to the point where constant reconfiguration was the only solution to keep everything up and running. Users had to physically relocate bulky HDMI cables to cannibalize the materials they had to work with. It was very time intensive to constantly move and reconfigure equipment on the fly, depending on a client's specific requirements.

In addition to the limitations of its current KVM technology, the scope of Chainsaw needs had to evolve to meet the requirements of a major change in its business landscape. Chainsaw was merging with SIM Digital, a camera and production gear rental company. As this new entity, Chainsaw, along with another sister company Bling Digital, was relocating to a new three-story 65,000-square-foot building at the historic Hollywood site where Eastman Kodak once had offices. The project scope transitioned from complex system upgrade to a complete greenfield technology build out in the new location.

"We lost one of our last receivers as we moved," said Chainsaw's chief engineer Jeff Sengpiehl. "It was like jumping off the bridge just before it falls down."





THE SOLUTION

After installation and setup, the organisation has an updated After reviewing solutions from three different companies, Chainsaw selected Black Box as the trusted and go-to provider in the media and entertainment space. Not only did Black Box offer a cost-effective solution, it also brought a long and strong reputation of delivering the highest quality solutions, expert assistance in integration, and customer service. It was an easy decision for Chainsaw.

Black Box proposed specialized solutions to ensure Chainsaw's IT infrastructure and KVM capabilities were optimized for current and future growth. As part of the integration, Black Box delivered a high-speed fiber-based high-performance KVM system in the new post-production facility. This allowed Chainsaw clients to have connectivity from any one of the 56 servers/CPUs to 51 displays/user consoles located in edit rooms, color prep rooms, media prep rooms and the on-site theater. This was achieved using a 288-port modular DKM chassis and 107 Tx/Rx units. With the industry's push for ultra-high quality, the system also uses 21 4K60 cards to accommodate the growing demand for 4K content.

This system allows clients to work from any location, accessing various servers and devices now back-racked in the central machine. If there is a camera on the first floor with footage, it can be transmitted through a Black Box receiver to a third floor monitor, allowing for seamless synergy between the post production and the camera floors. Before Black Box, every time Chainsaw wanted to introduce a client to a particular room, they'd have to carry a control surface to that location and make sure there was a path for physical lines. With Black Box's solution, a matrix switch was installed so that no additional wiring was needed to shift clients around. "Black Box is a much more elegant solution," said Sengpiehl.

THE RESULTS

Thanks to Black Box, Chainsaw was able to enter its new building without any interference in their service. It was "smooth sailing," according to Sengpiehl. Chainsaw is now confident knowing they have a system in place that is flexible enough to work well into the future.

With Black Box, "We are applying 20 years of experience to create the most modern and efficient post-production facility of its type," Chainsaw founder Bill DeRonde said in reference to the integration. "The infrastructure will take advantage of the latest technology for routing media and supporting high-resolution and ultra-high resolution workflows. It will be an open pipe and ready for anything."

Black Box's KVM matrix switch, modular transmitters, and control systems bring many advantages. For editors straining to cut action scenes or to color correct, loud computers in the editing suites are a thing of the past. This means less noise, enabling a better environment for productivity and creativity. When the technology is easy to use and delivers the performance needed, users can shift their focus from the technology to the things they do best. It also brings added security due to the remote location of the CPUs.

Perhaps most important is the massive flexibility of the system. It is set up so that 4K can be accessed in any suite in the building. "We are getting to the point where 4K content is the norm," Sengpiehl said. With Black Box's solution "I don't have to spend $30,000 for each room as long as we juggle the schedule a bit."

"We wanted to make sure that we had an infrastructure that could handle all our needs for the next 10 years or more," Sengpiehl said. "With Black Box's impressive breadth of solutions, service and expertise, we are confident that if we need any piece of the solution to make these disparate elements of the system work together, Black Box will have it. We can rest easy knowing that upgrades are much simpler than anything we could have expected or hoped for."

Experiencing the certainty that this process has brought to Chainsaw's Hollywood facility, Sengpiehl does not hesitate to recommend Black Box to sister companies, which are doing build-outs in both New York and Toronto. According to Sengpiehl, "If you're going to need a KVM solution, it would definitely be worth your while to look at Black Box."