



American Cinematographer
OCTOBER 2010

The Social Network
Presidents Desk
DVD Playback
Post Focus
 ADS
 Oasis Imagery
 Visual Data
 Remote 3-D Post
ASC Close-Up

Post Focus:
Advanced Digital Services
Oasis Imagery
Visual Data Media Services
Assimilate and Telairity

ADS Advances a Different Side of Post

Jon D. Witmer

In traversing the postproduction landscape, any project will pass through varied terrains, all of which are critical in delivering the finished content to viewers and preserving the final project for future generations. HD and SD duplication, SD standards conversion, up/down/cross conversion, electronic file encoding and delivery, DVD authoring, tape restoration — these are the types of offerings in which Advanced Digital Services specializes. “ADS provides a variety of digital services, including digital file encoding and transcoding, as well as multiple distribution platforms,” says Brad Weyl, the company’s chief operating officer. “We believe our mission is to be a mastering and sub-mastering facility and a distribution company for motion-picture studios, independent producers and broadcasters.”

Weyl recently guided *AC* through the company’s 28,000-square-foot facility in Hollywood, highlighting its many services and underscoring the core tenets of ADS’ philosophy: quality, security and reliability. “Though we have a huge facility and the ability to deal with a large volume of material, we’re small enough that the specific details of our customers’ orders never get lost,” says Weyl. “A large percentage of the material we process here — advertising, publicity and short-format material — needs to be turned around in 24 hours or less. We are detail-oriented, and we have operational staff in the building 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.”

ADS was founded in 1994 by Andy McIntyre, the company’s chairman, president and CEO. For a number of years, the company split its services between two facilities — one in Hollywood and one in North Hollywood — but in 2002, ADS consolidated its operation. Weyl notes, “We designed this facility with multiple work areas in mind so that we can separate different types of jobs. One of our philosophies is to provide the proper tools to accomplish the job in a timely and efficient manner while building quality and integrity into the product as we go. Throughout the facility,

Article Images
click image to enlarge



everything is integrated into a system that allows the operators to continuously monitor the quality of the workflow, from checking signal performance and integrity on scopes and monitors to critical listening on high-performance speakers and the like as they do their jobs.

“We also offer 100-percent QC for HD and SD in both tape and file formats,” Weyl continues. The facility’s ground floor houses a dedicated tape QC area, with multiple stations set up for both HD and dual-SD (NTSC and PAL) work. Weyl details, “We support all of the various tape formats for HD and SD. We view the material from head to tail and do a computer-generated report on it. We live and breathe by the spec books and spec sheets from the studios and broadcasters to make sure that what’s sent to our customers meets broadcast, FCC and studio requirements.”

The ground floor also houses ADS’ shipping and receiving area. Everything that is delivered is bar-coded and entered into the company’s Xytech-based tracking system, which is used to track orders and manage the inventory. Throughout every step of the pipeline, security is of paramount concern. Weyl notes, “The facility has undergone multiple MPAA site surveys, and some of the studios have brought in their own security teams and done site surveys. We make sure our customers feel comfortable and confident that we’re taking good care of their assets.”

A large media area and an online edit room — capable of linear tape-based and nonlinear file-based work — sit at the heart of the ground floor. Weyl explains, “In the media area, we capture material from HD or SD tape and create files for DVD authoring, for posting to FTP sites, or for proprietary file distribution via platforms like SmartJog. From file-based material, we export out to videotape; an independent production that doesn’t have the infrastructure to export to tape can send a drive to us, and we can then export either a final product or work files. We’re running multiple Final Cut Pro HD systems, multiple Digital Rapids encoders, two Sonic Solutions’ Scenarist DVD-authoring systems and a variety of tape and computer equipment.”

In broad strokes, the ground floor is focused on short-format material requiring fast turnaround, while the second story is set up to tackle more time-intensive projects. For example, the Digital Operations Center houses multiple encode stations where, Weyl explains, “we’re taking HD content from a studio library and encoding it to whatever format the customer requires, such as a JPEG2000 file, 100-percent QC’ing it and sending it back out as a file for our customers to store in multiple locations so they have safety copies. We’re also doing a lot of library-type work that’s pushed out to end users such as Amazon, Netflix, Hulu and iTunes.”

For file-based deliverables, he continues, “we can push the files off to our customers via a few different methods. One is across SohoNet, a closed-loop fiber-optic network. We also have multiple 100-megabit connections in and out of the building, along with 270-megabit fiber-optic connectivity in and out of the building, so we can do a real-time HD or SD play-out or receive.”

Another key aspect of ADS’ services is tape-based restoration work utilizing Snell & Wilcox Archangel and the DRS Digital Restoration System. When working with old 1" or 2" tape, Weyl explains, “we’ll

determine whether it needs to be baked or dehumidified, after which we can do a pass and bump it up to a digital-tape format.” Then, working from the digital tape, the SD Archangel workflow “takes out film dirt, film weave, grain, noise and video drop outs in a real-time process,” Weyl details. “We do a QC to identify any large things the Archangel didn’t remove, and then we can go back in frame-by-frame using DRS to remove those.

“After that, we take a pass through our audio department to remove hiss, pops and crackle. We’re set up in here for linear tape-based work, as well as file-based work utilizing Pro Tools.” Services handled by the audio department also include layback of foreign audio tracks for foreign distribution, Dolby encoding and final audio conforming for independent features.

In recent years, ADS has become actively engaged in digital-cinema packaging, utilizing Clipster to deliver content. Additionally, the facility already offers some 3-D services for both tape- and file-based workflows. The next step the company foresees is the creation of a state-of-the-art Web-based file-delivery platform, which will enable customers to stream or download (in various file formats) works in process and finished content.

“We’re partners with our customers,” says Weyl. “We instill in our staff the question, ‘If this were your project, how would you deal with it and make it better?’”

ADS, 948 N. Cahuenga Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif., 90038. For more information, visit www.adshollywood.com.

Related Links

www.adshollywood.com 

www.oasisimagery.com 

www.visualdatainc.com 

www.assimilateinc.com 

www.telairity.com 

[<< previous](#) || [next >>](#)

[ASC ROSTER](#) | [ASC NEWSLETTER SIGN UP](#) | [PRIVACY POLICY](#) | [TERMS OF USE](#) | [CONTACT US](#)

© 2010 American Society of Cinematographers.



Advanced Digital Services' Hollywood facility includes a Digital Operations Center, which houses multiple stations for encoding and quality-checking library content for studios and independent producers.



At the heart of ADS' duplication, standards conversion and up/down/cross-conversion services, the machine room is equipped to handle tape- and file-based SD (NTSC and PAL) and HD content.