Chicken Bone FX Studios excels with pixitmedia Cloud workflow

Images courtesy of Chicken Bone FX©

pixitmedia
A Kalray Company

Chicken Bone FX Studios

Streamlined storage architecture boosts performance, powers scalability and lowers costs for leading global VFX studio

Chicken Bone FX Studios teamed up with pixitmedia and Konsistent Consulting to design a high-performance and intelligent data managed solution running in the Cloud. Based on pixstor secured workstations connected by ngenea to AWS, the new agile and scalable collaborative workflow serves high-end film and TV clients, with the artistry of the best visual effects talent located anywhere in the world.

Local Leadership, Global Talent

Chicken Bone FX Studios is one of the finest boutique VFX facilities in the business, employing up to 80 artists known for masterful visuals, high-end environments, photoreal FX, compositing technical prowess and innovative global workflow. The company has grown steadily over 10 years working for Netflix, Apple, Warner Bros, HBO, AMC, Amazon Studios, NBC, ABC, CBS, Hulu, and others on some of the industry's

highest-profile series such as Westworld, The Queen's Gambit and Foundation, as well as features like The Highwaymen and The Kissing Booth 2.

In order to work with teams of artists at its hubs in Los Angeles, New York and in regions all over the world, CBFX was established as a virtual studio. By the nature of the work, visual effects facilities need to be able to flex both up and down, as projects demand. It is always looking to evolve its core technologies to secure maximum production flexibility, cost-efficiency and scalability to match project demand.

Roadblock to progress

By 2020, the existing Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) at CBFX was becoming more of a burden than a bonus. The on-premise shared storage was no longer able to sustain the performance or elasticity required for CBFX to maintain growth. The infrastructure was putting a brake on its capacity to burst resources quickly, while requiring costly upfront investment in hardware.

pixitmedia
A Kalray Company

Images courtesy of Chicken Bone FX©

"Scalability is a pivotal, operational concept for VFX and has always been a part of our model, but we'd reached the end of the line with our current environment. It was painfully slow and not giving us the performance we required consistently." Explains John Renzulli, Founder/VFX Supervisor, CBFX.

With years of experience working at the cutting edge of virtualized workflows, CBFX had a deep understanding of what it wanted to achieve. The facility's conceptual architecture, in which local hot storage was linked to the Cloud, remained sound, but the exact components of its make-up needed to be overhauled and changed up.

In addition to needing to implement faster and more flexible storage, CBFX wanted a smarter system that would optimize data tiering and efficiency. Completed projects and data less critical to the day-to-day of a production should be automatically routed to more cost-effective 'warm or cool' storage tiers.

"The cost-benefit analysis of workflow improvement through leaning more heavily on public cloud solutions and utilising intelligent data management was immediate and clear to us." says Renzulli. "Moving into an environment where we had the ability and the control and scale of our virtual desktops, plus storage in an almost real-time manner was incredibly attractive. The only question was which solutions developer to partner with."

High performance and a clear highway

CBFX needed infinite scalability, superior speed and greater flexibility to realize its goal of moving data-heavy and tight-to-deadline projects seamlessly across the USA and internationally. Understanding that this was at the heart of the issue, the team naturally turned to pixitmedia.

Working closely with the facility, pixitmedia devised, tested and implemented a fully cloud-based set-up for CBFX's 2D pipeline. This featured a pixstor 'hot' tier on the front end for live projects and AWS S3 for Cloud storage with infinite archive capacity. ngenea provides the high-performance data management layer that intelligently extends and scales the local filesystem into S3 'warm or cold' storage tiers to give CBFX granular control of their data.

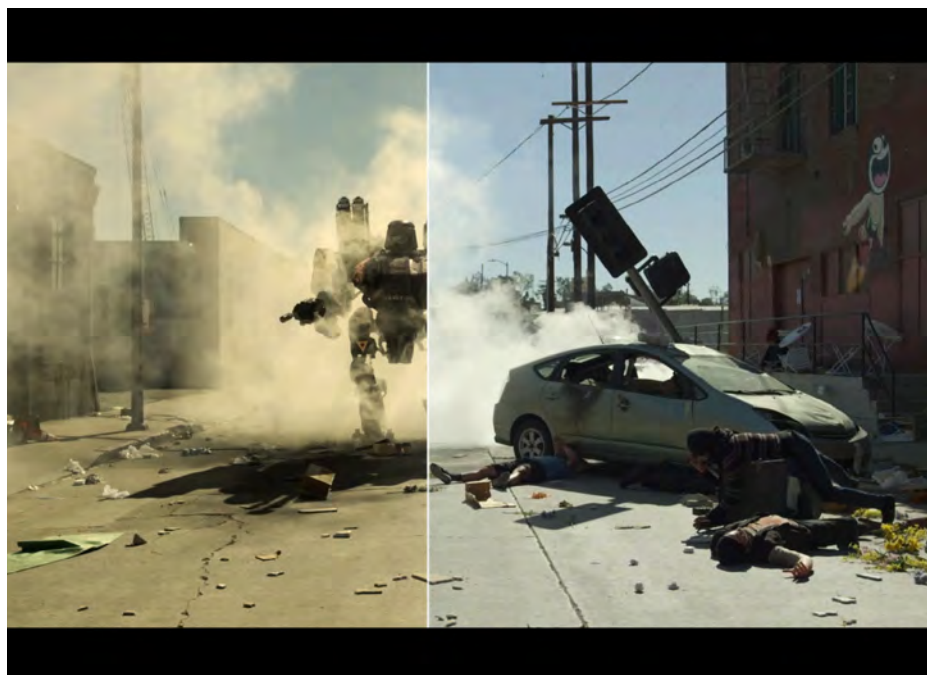## Specifically, the solution involved:

- 20 TB of front-end IO storage with multiple storage nodes serving the client applications
- A separate management node provisioned for ngenea and data IO

Key benefits of the solution:

- CBFX editors and creative teams gained rapid access to hot data
- Policies under the control of CBFX automatically and intelligently transfer data into S3 storage to optimize cost-efficiency

Barry Evans, CTO pixitmedia, said "It is an absolute pleasure working with a studio such as Chicken Bone FX; they are such a forward-thinking business. They understand the importance of not having to change their existing workflow to make use of technology, but having a storage and data management solution that adapts to their workflow."

"It was super easy and completely painless," says Derek Zavada, Director of Technology, CBFX. "We devised a strategy with pixitmedia's engineers, a setup, configuration, and testing period. Everything we scheduled was exactly on time. Everything we tested worked as expected, with no disruption to our creative team."

Images courtesy of Chicken Bone FX©

pixitmedia®
A Kalray Company

Images courtesy of Chicken Bone FX©

Global scale and cost-efficiency

The impact was immediate. CBFX's artists and producers benefited from an instant leap in performance as the sluggish access and sharing of project bins was consigned to history.

pixstor is designed for the rigor and speed of Hollywood workflows. By making the switch to pixstor, CBFX gained a highly performant hot storage cluster supported by 'on tap' capacity in the cloud overnight.

Constantly managing the transfer of data between pixstor and AWS S3 is ngenea. Its intelligent data-management engine monitors and leverages the tiering of data into the most cost-efficient storage, dramatically reducing the overall cost for CBFX.

"Storage is expensive, regardless of what you use, and we use a lot of it," says Derek Zavada, Director of Technology, CBFX. *"We also need high speeds. pixitmedia allowed us to square that circle."*

"The pixitmedia solution allows us to have less storage than we would normally require because we can keep less frequently accessed content on S3. If somebody needs data that is not held directly on the pixstor, it automatically gets recalled in the background. If data goes idle, for a period that we designate, then it automatically goes back to S3. That is a really big plus point, since it removes a layer of management that we need to deal with and saves us money."

Building the future on the pixitmedia foundation

With their 2D operation successfully migrated to pixitmedia's faster, smoother, more reactive system, Chicken Bone FX Studios has advanced plans to onboard its 3D setup.

The team also has plans to go multi-region in the near future, including establishing a high-performance link-up with both their East and West Coast US facilities, for a truly seamless, collaborative and global working environment.

Renzulli says, *"We are not just a facility that supports in post, we start at the script stage and in pre-production to improve creative iteration cycles, create efficiencies of process, and protect budgets. With pixitmedia we are able to super-serve this mission with global growth and scalability. Entering a variety of markets is now a reality, since pixitmedia takes the pain out of the process and allows our incredible creative teams to focus purely on their art."*

About pixitmedia

pixitmedia is a Kalray company (Euronext, ALKAL), a leading provider in the new generation of processors and acceleration cards specialized in Intelligent Data Processing from cloud to Edge. pixitmedia and Kalray share a common vision and a complementary value proposition in both software and hardware to address today's and tomorrow's data-intensive world with solutions for a more intelligent, effective, energy-wise and user-friendly data-driven world.

pixitmedia facilitates seamless collaboration to enable the power of ideas. Our award-winning purpose-built, software-defined storage and data solutions simplify the flow of data to connect an increasingly complex world. Our aim is to deliver beyond expectations throughout all areas of our operation. We devise optimized solutions that give customers both choice and freedom, our restless innovation constantly pushes boundaries and the unrivalled care and knowledge of our team ensure optimum performance and value. Customer success is at the heart of our business, we have technical specialists and a unique, dedicated lab facility to guarantee the effectiveness of our solutions.

For more information, please visit: https://www.pixitmedia.com or email: marketing@pixitmedia.com

For more information on pixitmedia solutions:

UK Sales: +44 (0) 345 052 3721   e: info@pixitmedia.com

US Sales: +1 (424) 537-4948   w: pixitmedia.com

pixitmedia
A Kalray Company