



Don't Laugh: G-Technology® Storage Can Make or Break a Comedy Series

In the early '80s, Federal Express® became famous for letting everyone know that some projects "absolutely, positively [have] to be there overnight." Of course, the less-promoted caveat in FedEx®'s system was that you had to have the package ready to drop off by the company's deadline. If you reached the desk at, say, 5:59, you were fine. If you hit 6:01, you'd be putting someone on a plane to deliver that "has to be there" package instead.

This production staff of the quirky IFC® hit comedy *Portlandia* experienced this policy first-hand in 2010. At the time, one of the show's most critical tasks was getting episodes to press in order to promote the show before it aired. These press mailers set the reputation of the entire season and could make or break a series.

Saddled with inefficient storage technology that dragged on processing and exporting for hours, *Portlandia* editors couldn't get their daily footage ready for shipping before FedEx's deadline. Everyone knew the consequence. The team bought a red eye ticket from Portland to New York, and a staffer drew the short straw for an exhausting but critical trip.

"We were using FireWire, just staring at it copying," recalls *Portlandia* post production supervisor Ted Pacult. "It was going to take 40 minutes, and we had 30 minutes to make cut-off. At that moment, we knew it was blown. But we learned our lesson, and that situation won't occur again. With G-Technology's G-DRIVE® ev SSDs, G-DOCK ev®s, and G-SPEED® Studio XLs, our pipeline is now comparatively instantaneous."



From Portlandia to Documentary Now: Better Workflow

Pacult appreciates how superior technology and equipment can shape a show's prospects during the startup process, and he's applying that wisdom to his newest project, IFC's *Documentary Now* by Saturday Night Live alumni Seth Meyers, Fred Armisen, and Bill Hader. *Documentary Now* takes farcical jabs at documentary styles through the ages. From a 1920s Eskimo documentary to a 1970s "rock doc," the show admirably follows original styles without sacrificing modern humor. Helen Mirren bestows her stately gravitas to each episode's introduction

Portlandia and *Documentary Now* share some of the same actors and much of the same crew, including G-TEAM ambassador Alex Buono, who serves as co-director and director of photography on the new series. Both shows have production staff in Portland, New York, and Los Angeles. The production requires an ongoing quick turnaround time, which isn't easy with a bi-coastal editorial staff. Over the years, though, they've learned to make it work, in part by standardizing on G-Technology storage solutions.

Documentary Now footage flows into the Beverly Hills, CA editorial production facility, where it immediately backs up to a G-Technology G-SPEED Studio XL drive. An assistant editor then transcodes, organizes, and preps footage as ProRes files for shipping to editors in New York, who have their own G-SPEED Studio XL for editing and storage. Naturally, LA retains all of the files on their Studio XL in case anything should happen to New York's copies.

Show drives for both shows continue to fly via overnight FedEx between New York, Los Angeles, and Portland, but careful as FedEx might be, drops and other accidents can still happen. As a result, Pacult and Buono prefer to use the G-DRIVE® ev ATC with Thunderbolt™ as a shuttle, both for its ruggedness and transfer speed as well as the convenience of its dock ecosystem. (To be fair, Documentary Now production hasn't yet deployed the G-DOCK ev component to its workflow, although the Portlandia team has enjoyed it for some time.) Editors work diligently to make sure that data stays structured identically on drives at both coasts so that, according to Pacult, "the only thing being transferred back to LA is the folder structure with all of the NY editor's assets minus the media, since the media is already in LA." Once the asset files reach LA, the editing team loads them onto their RAID-protected G-SPEED Studio XL and their NAS system populated with 4TB HGST Deskstar NAS drives.

Increasing Speed

As mentioned, the shift to G-Technology storage has worked minor miracles in Portlandia and Documentary Now workflow efficiencies. Adopting SSD, Thunderbolt, and RAID solutions optimized around a creative workflow was exactly what the editors and producers needed. Of course, the question remains: How to improve workflow further from here?

As mentioned, overnight shipping was essential to the group's long-distance editing process. If there was a shoot in Portland on Monday, data would be checked on Tuesday and sent off by the FedEx deadline. However, it wouldn't be received in Los Angeles until Wednesday morning. Once the footage arrived in LA, there would be at least a two-hour lag while files offloaded from the shuttle drive(s) to the site's G-SPEED Studio XL. Typically, this meant starting real work after lunch.



This year, both shows turned to 10 Gb/s data piping between Portland and LA for transfer of footage. Essentially, this involves using redundant high-speed connections between data centers in both cities to provide local network-class performance securely over the public Internet. Now, when the DIT completes transferring camera drive contents onto the G-SPEED Studio XL, he then loads the ProRes data onto a G-DRIVE ev shuttle, whisks it down to the local data center, which has the files ready within a few hours in LA. That location, in turn, drops the files onto a G-DRIVE ev SSD to be ready for editing first thing in the morning. Files transfer from the G-DRIVE ev SSD to LA's G-SPEED Studio XL in under 20 minutes (rather than the several hours required before switching to G-Technology).

In essence, Pacult and Buono have helped to erase multi-hour or day-long chunks of latency from their storage workflows with G-Technology and data piping solutions. The sanity gained and extra costs avoided (including red eye tickets) through these changes have been monumental.

Why Pros Love G-Technology

Pacult discovered G-Technology in 2007 and soon after he started following the RED® camera user forum reduser.net. Not surprisingly, people on the forum tend to push their devices hard, and many are rabid advocates of G-Technology. They recommended using the brand for shuttle drives because "they are the fastest and most reliable and don't have issues with cooling." Today, Pacult still considers G-Technology to be gold standard for consumer, prosumer, and professional-grade equipment.

Thanks to Buono's and Pacult's influence, Portlandia and Documentary Now are both officially G-Technology-affiliated shows. But both men remain emphatic about how this partnership is grounded in quality, performance, and support — or the lack of need for it. Despite years of reliance on multiple G-Technology product families, the need to reach out to tech support has been almost non-existent. Pacult does recall one story about how he needed help in accessing

Portlandia archive footage. The necessary season three files were on an eSATA device, which no one on the staff had used before. Pacult called G-Technology and asked for directions on the quickest, easiest way to access the material. G-Technology customer service was "incredibly quick, incredibly courteous, and very insightful with what we needed to do ... and that was that."



Currently, Portlandia uses Canon® C300 cameras. Talk is mounting, though, of switching to RED, which would mean they would be working with RAW media or ProRes 4444 footage multi-cam. This will place even more imperative need on storage speed and capacity than producers face now. This is one of several reasons why the eight-bay G-SPEED Studio XL became the de facto editing and storage solution for both TV shows. Capacity and simplicity also figure highly in their recommendation.

"Portlandia seasons 1 and 2 required 15 separate storage products per season," says Pacult. "Seasons 3 and 4 needed two. Now it's down to just one — the G-SPEED Studio XL. That one box can fit everything, protect everything, and it's faster than anything we've used before."

No matter what massive demands might arise from near-term capture technology upgrades on these shows, G-Technology solutions are already prepared to shoulder the load.



Portlandia
<http://www.ifc.com/shows/portlandia>

Documentary Now
<http://www.ifc.com/shows/documentary-now>

G-TEAM Member Alex Buono
<http://www.g-technology.com/g-team/alex-buono>

g-technology.com



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