

Arts+Labor accelerates media production, saving hours and telling richer stories with Dell Precision mobile workstations



- Desktop/Laptop refresh
- Mobility
- Workstations



“We can make much better creative decisions, faster than ever before, with the Adobe Creative Suite CS5 and Dell Precision workstations.”

Erik Horn, Creative Director, Arts+Labor

Customer profile

Company:	Arts+Labor
Industry:	Communications
Country:	United States
Employees:	30+ combined full-time and contract team members
Website:	www.arts-and-labor.com

Business need

Media production and creative content firm Arts+Labor wanted to enhance creativity and increase efficiency with new software and hardware that could help eliminate transcoding of high-definition (HD) video formats, accelerate video editing, and enhance 3D rendering.

Solution

The firm chose Dell Precision™ M6600 mobile workstations and Dell Precision T7500 tower workstations with Dell monitors to maximize the benefits of migrating to Adobe® Premiere® video production software and increase performance for 3D rendering.



Benefits

- Eliminated the need to transcode HD video, saving up to 12 hours and facilitating rapid decisions
- Reduced 3D rendering time significantly
- Accelerated additional production tasks, helping to control costs and meet tight client deadlines
- Gained the mobility to capitalize on high-powered workstations on video shoots
- Sponsored creativity by providing instant feedback to team members

The Austin, Texas–based creative content and media production firm [Arts+Labor](#) is dedicated to telling stories, in whatever form its clients desire. From music videos and ad campaigns to television commercials and feature-length films, Arts+Labor integrates compelling writing and stunning visuals into productions that grab and hold a viewer’s attention.

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*Erik Horn, Creative Director,
Arts+Labor*

Throughout the end-to-end creation process, the firm’s creative team uses a wide variety of software applications, including [Adobe Photoshop®](#) for building storyboards, [Adobe After Effects®](#) for compositing and other postproduction work, and applications for producing 3D graphics. For years, many of those applications ran on Apple laptops and desktops. But the release of new software updates from Adobe led the Arts+Labor team to contemplate a change.

“We are constantly looking for new ways to spur creativity and improve efficiency,” says Erik Horn, creative director at Arts+Labor. “We recently decided to move from Apple Final Cut Pro to [Adobe Premiere](#) for video editing with the release of 64-bit versions of Premiere and After Effects. The 64-bit applications let us take advantage of much greater memory capacity than before to speed up key editing and postproduction tasks. We needed new workstations that could provide the processing performance and memory capacity to maximize the benefits of the software.”

New workstations could also help enhance creativity by completing 3D rendering faster and rapidly processing the large data volumes produced by new HD video cameras, including the Red and Phantom cameras. “With powerful enough workstations, we can gain immediate feedback on our work and experiment with ideas much more quickly and easily,” says Horn.

Selecting a new platform for the creative workflow

Arts+Labor had produced several videos for Dell in the past, and the two companies had developed a strong relationship. When the Dell account team discussed the coming launch of a new [Dell Precision](#) mobile workstation, the Arts+Labor creative group immediately saw its potential for video production. “Especially when we are shooting on location, we need computers that are powerful and portable,” says Horn. “The new Dell Precision mobile workstation seemed like the perfect fit.”

The Dell Precision M6600 mobile workstation combines [Intel® Core™ i7](#) processors, up to 32 GB of memory, a true workstation-class [NVIDIA® Quadro®](#) graphics card, and a

Technology at work

Hardware

[Dell Precision™ M6600](#) mobile workstation

[Dell Precision T7500](#) tower workstation

[Dell UltraSharp™ 24-](#) and [27-inch](#) monitors

Software

[Windows® 7](#)

[Adobe® Premiere®](#)



17-inch screen to deliver outstanding performance for video production, 3D modeling, and a full range of other applications. "Our team members need to handle a wide variety of functions, from video editing and compositing to music editing and media production for interactive formats," says Horn. "We can use a single platform to handle all of those tasks efficiently with Dell Precision workstations."

Demonstrating the power of Dell Precision workstations through a real-world project

To fully evaluate the new Dell mobile workstations and to help showcase the workstations' performance for other potential customers, the Arts+Labor team collaborated with Dell on a new video. Shot with a high-speed Phantom camera from Vision Research, the slow-motion video follows a beautiful custom motorcycle from Travertson Motorcycles zooming down a racetrack, first past a designer modeling the same bike with 3D modeling software on a Dell Precision mobile workstation, seemingly doing engineering tests in the field. The camera then reveals a video crew that is filming and capturing the action in real time on another Dell mobile workstation. The video then continues to show, in 1,000 frames a second HD detail, hats flying off heads, coffee flying through the air, and people running for cover as a huge spaceship comes crashing onto the scene. This is then revealed to be rendered in real time on a

third Dell Precision mobile workstation, showing the process from inception to finalization. (See the video at Dell.com/SpeedOfThought.)

To produce this dramatic video, the Arts+Labor team used two Dell Precision M6600 mobile workstations and two Dell Precision T7500 tower workstations running the creative software applications on the [Windows® 7](http://Windows.com) operating system. The benefits of the Dell workstations were instantly clear to the creative team. "We could see the eyes of the camera operator light up when he used the Dell Precision mobile workstation to ingest the video from the Phantom camera—there was a huge performance improvement compared with traditional laptops," says Horn.

With Adobe Premiere running on powerful Dell workstations, the creative team could view results immediately. "Adobe Premiere supports almost every HD video format natively—a huge advantage over Final Cut Pro—so we can review video on location, without waiting hours for raw footage to be transcoded into an 'acceptable' format for editing," says Horn. "Eliminating the time of transcoding can make a tremendous difference for video production. Because we can see what we were capturing right away, we can make creative decisions quickly, on the spot."

The crew scrutinized each shot without having to leave the set by using two [Dell UltraSharp™](http://Dell.com) monitors, one 24 inches, the other 27. "If you don't have the right-sized

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monitor, you can miss things that will force you to do costly reshoots later on," says Horn. "We were able to see all of the glorious HD detail of the video with these Dell monitors."

Eliminating transcoding and saving 12 hours of production time

With support for HD video formats from Adobe Premiere and the performance for viewing HD video in real time from Dell workstations, the Arts+Labor team has eliminated time-consuming video transcoding. "Previously, it might have taken 12 hours to prepare video for editing. When the process was done, we still couldn't see it at its highest resolution," says Horn. "Now we can place video directly on the editing timeline and view it in its raw, HD format. We can make much better creative decisions, faster than ever before, with the Adobe Creative Suite CS5 and Dell Precision workstations."

Accelerating production tasks

The Dell workstations also help speed up the production workflow by accelerating a range of tasks, such as rendering 3D models and exporting videos in multiple formats. "The time to create a photo-realistic rendering with a 3D modeling application has been cut significantly running on a Dell Precision workstation," says Horn. "Having that faster feedback allows us to continue the creative process without interruptions and to meet our tight client deadlines."

Video production processes are faster as well. "The latest versions of Adobe Premiere and After Effects are closely integrated. We now have the processing power to run both applications simultaneously with the new workstations, so we no longer have to continuously import and export media from one application to the other," says Horn. "We can know exactly how the end result will look, right away. It's been pretty eye-opening."

Cutting costs and sponsoring creativity

Speeding up these and other tasks can help Arts+Labor reduce production costs considerably. Those cost savings can help the company sustain its competitive edge. "By saving time and money, we can pass these savings along so it's easier to attract and retain clients," says Horn.

Cost savings also enables the firm to reinvest in creativity. "We can hire more artists, and we can invest in our own, self-financed creative projects, such as the feature-length films we produce," says Horn. "Ultimately, we will be able to tell more stories, in new and more creative ways than ever before, with the latest Dell Precision mobile workstations."

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