

From Red Carpet To The Press ASAP

A Case Study On MTV's Effort To Increase Output And Decrease Cost At Live Events



The Challenge

*Get The Best Footage From The Red Carpet To The Media, Press Outlets,
The Web, And Social Channels In Minimum Time, At Minimum Cost.*

MTV Music group needed a way to capture video from the red carpet at their live events and swiftly deliver it to the press and media outlets. MTV wanted to do this with minimum people, at minimum cost and minimum technology footprint. They needed a solution they could easily transport and use at events like the MTV Video Music Awards, CMT Music Awards, MTV2 Woodie Awards, VH1 Divas and SXSW.

This challenge was placed at the feet of Jason Pattan, Senior Director of Content Production and Technology Management. Jason's role at MTV is to act as a change agent, reviewing and testing new technologies, vetting their production-readiness, and then devising strategies to implement these technologies across MTV's properties. As you'll see in the sections below, Jason stepped up to this challenge with an innovative, cloud-based approach and achieved MTV's goals.

MTV's first goal was to remove the need for using a satellite truck. At live events there is much contention for use of the satellite trucks and feeds. The live-to-air event feed always takes priority, with red carpet footage taking a distant second place. So MTV was in need of a separate solution for capturing, logging, encoding and delivering red carpet footage, using a low cost, small footprint architecture.

MTV's second goal was to increase the output of red carpet clips. In the past, red carpet footage was sometimes lost as operators scrambled to catch up with the speed of celebrities moving across the red carpet. There is zero room for error, especially if the next celebrity up is Miley

Cyrus or Kanye West. Backtracking over backup feed tapes to capture lost footage was just too time consuming, and often too late.

MTV also wanted to reduce the number of people required from two or more per feed to a single person. This means that the solution needs to be simple to operate, with as few moving parts as possible.

The solution needed to provide for the following workflow:

1. performing cuts on a growing file, as it is ingested live from red carpet cameras;
2. capturing metadata about each clip, so it can be found by media outlets;
3. final editorial approval of each clip, prior to delivery;
4. delivering the clips to an event portal where they can easily be previewed and downloaded by media outlets for timely publishing;
5. delivering the clips to the MTV CMS for publishing to the web and social outlets.

Alternatives

The traditional way that live event footage was captured was to use the existing live TV production infrastructure at the event, which meant using a satellite truck and crew – an expensive proposition. The trucks and satellite feeds are in much contention at live events, so competing for use of these resources became a costly and frustrating waiting game, often resulting in long delays in getting the content to media outlets.

Traditional editing tools for performing rough cuts against a live growing file directly from a camera typically require a heavy server-based infrastructure. MTV wanted to find a lighter solution, reducing the need for additional rack space, power and air conditioning consumption.

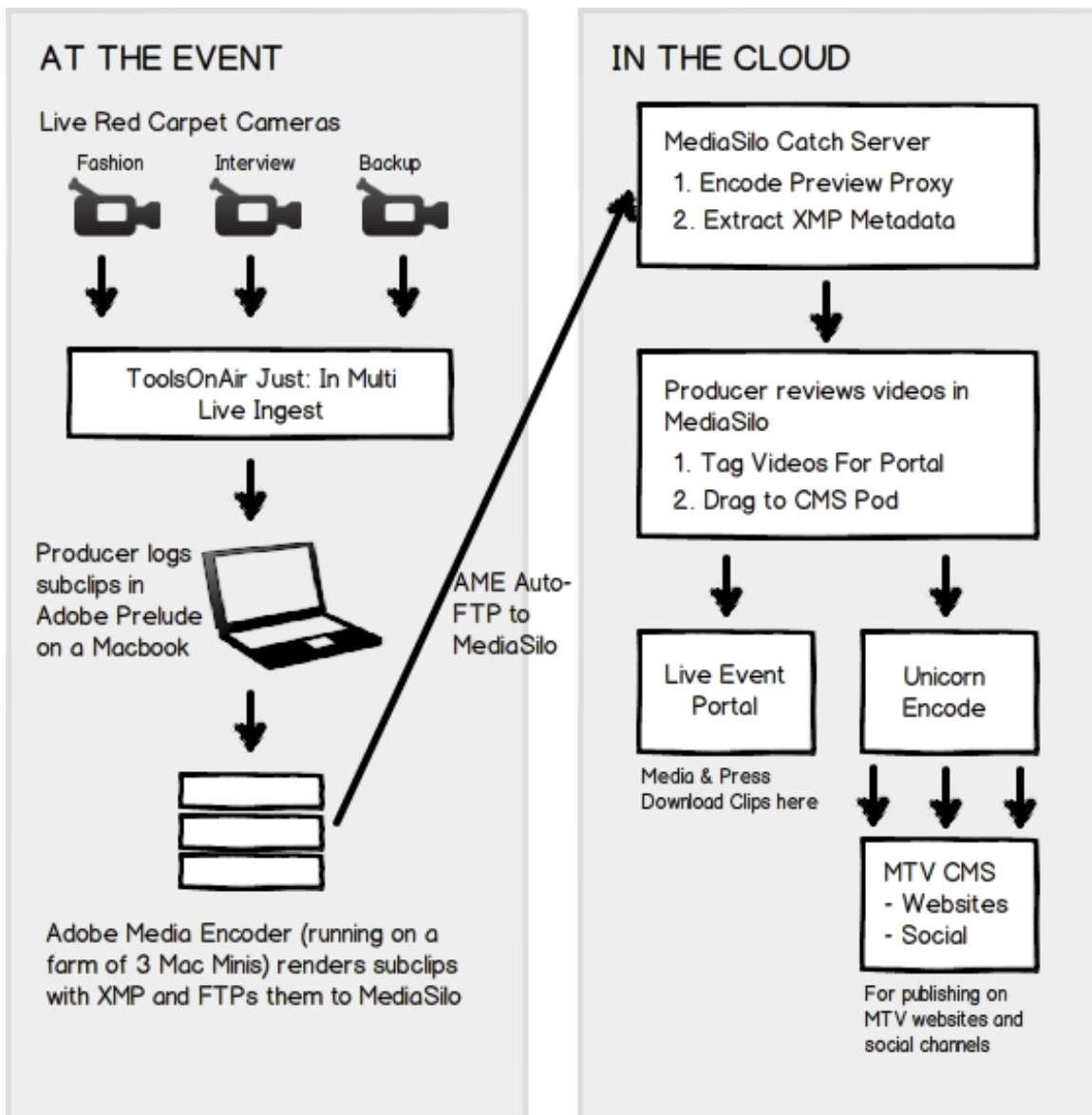
There are a number of existing solutions for delivering files to the media outlets and CMSs. Most of MTV's media outlets do not have a live ingest infrastructure, making delivery via satellite a non-starter. The most basic method for delivering files is FTP, however FTP alone would leave the media outlets with a clumsy filename-based method for browsing files, requiring a download before the clip can be previewed, with no guarantee that they have the right codecs to play the clip. Consumer file-sharing platforms, while more convenient than FTP, suffer the same format issues – no preview is generated so a media outlet needs to install codecs and download the file before it can be previewed.

Gathering quality metadata quickly is a priority for MTV, making sure that clips are properly categorized for the media outlets and CMSs, and can later be found and repurposed. There are precious few solutions that effectively provide for capturing metadata at the point of ingest, then carrying the metadata through the entire logging, encoding and publishing workflow.

The Solution

When presented with the above challenge, Jason Pattan devised a fully digital video logging, encoding and delivery workflow using the leanest and meanest tools on the market. MTV's requirements called for a "best-of-breed" solution, using technology from multiple vendors to fit with MTV's workflow needs. A base requirement for each technology is that it has an open API, with interoperability and ease of use at the forefront of its design.

The following diagram demonstrates the workflow and various technologies used as part of the solution.

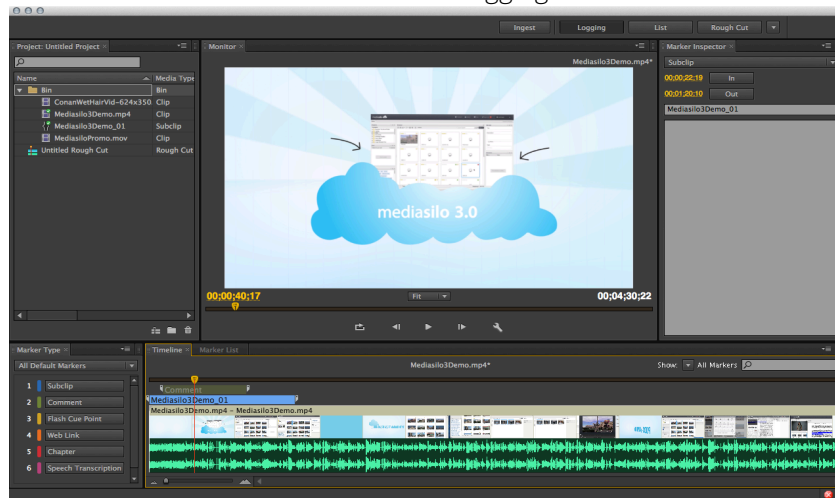


The workflow runs as follows:

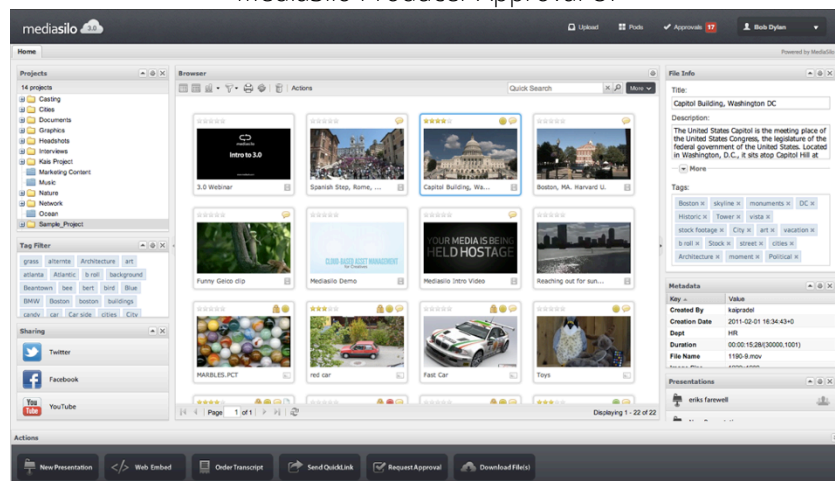
1. Three cameras capture different angles live on the red carpet.

2. ToolsOnAir Just: In ingests the live feed from the cameras.
3. The on-set producer logs the growing video files using Adobe Prelude. The producer marks in and out points for interesting/useful subclips. The producer will name and describe the subclip using XMP metadata in Prelude.
4. The producer sends the subclips to a mini AME farm running on a three Mac Minis in a portable flight case.
5. AME renders & encodes the subclips to XDCAM, then FTPs the XDCAM files to MediaSilo's Catch Server.
6. The MediaSilo Catch Server generates proxies for files that arrive via FTP, and extracts the XMP metadata (entered in Prelude) from the file headers. MediaSilo creates a new asset entry with the XDCAM source, proxy, and XMP metadata.
7. A producer reviews the video and metadata for all assets coming from the red carpet. The assets are then tagged for publishing on the Live Event Portal, and/or are dragged to the MTV CMS pod in MediaSilo for publishing to the MTV CMS.
8. The MTV web team may publish the subclips to MTV websites or social networks.

Adobe Prelude Logging UI

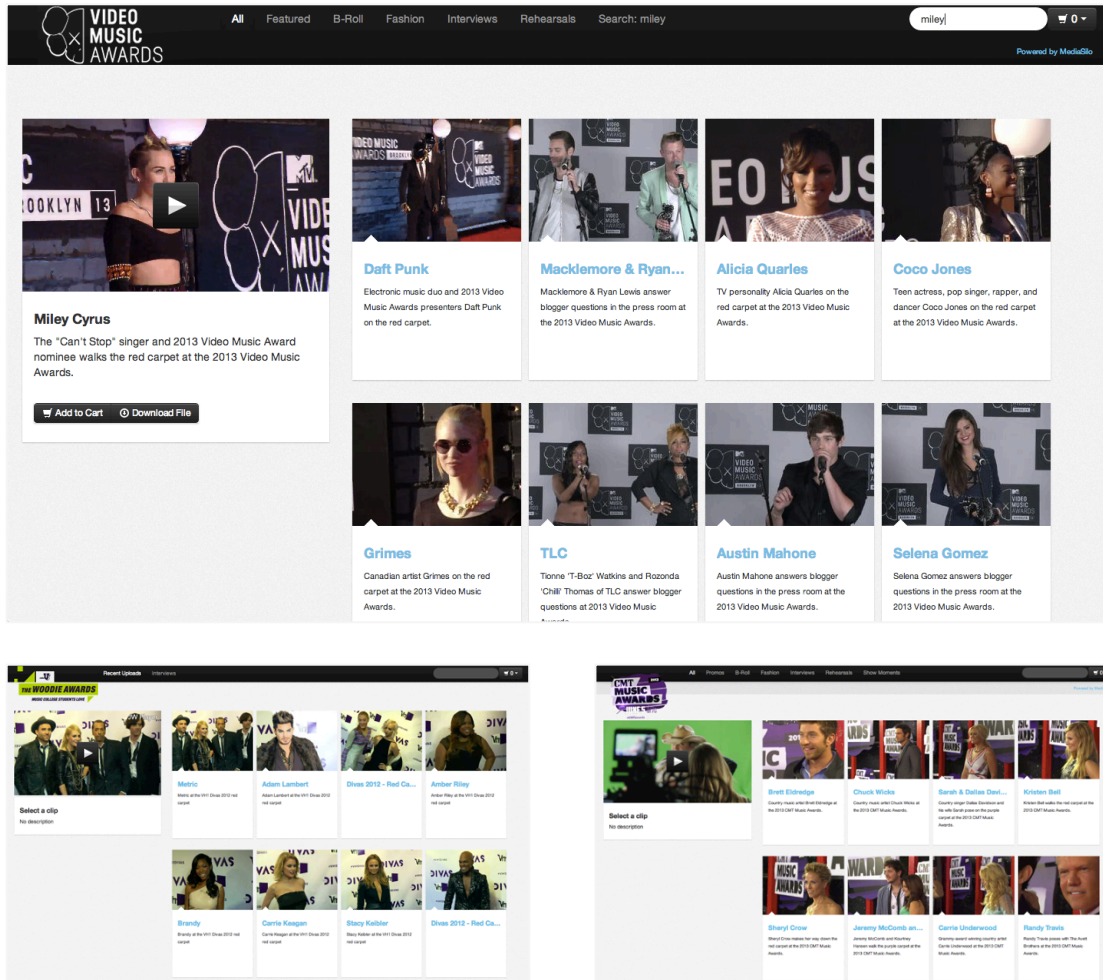


MediaSilo Producer Approval UI



The following web screen shots show the live event portals where media outlets, press and entertainment news shows can easily search, browse, and download red carpet footage. The shopping cart helps users to gather their content before downloading.

MTV Live Event Portal Examples



Implementation

The solution is light and portable, meaning that it takes MTV technical staff only a few hours to install, configure and test the solution for each live event. The equipment is light enough to be transported by one person over public transport or taxi. The setup is usually performed a day or two before the live event, minimizing the need to fly extraneous staff to the event several days early. The on-set staff follow a set of repeatable steps, connecting each pre-configured component.

Timeline

The timeline to build the first version of the solution was very short – three months from design to the first live event, which was the 2013 Woodies. Jason Pattan's broad knowledge of digital media technologies and live workflows, plus his knack for experimentation and finding bugs allowed the timeline of the project to be drastically accelerated. This was a collaborative effort between Jason, MediaSilo and Adobe. Other vendors were introduced after the Woodies as Jason evolved and enhanced the solution workflow.

Results

With this super light solution, Jason Pattan achieved the following results:

- Clips are delivered from the red carpet to the press in as little as 10 minutes.
- Only one person is required to operate the entire workflow.
- No satellite trucks or feeds are needed – just an internet connection.
- All hardware can be transported by one person in a small flight case.
- Setup is quick, simple and repeatable.

The Pro Video Coalition published an interview with Jason Pattan from MTV, where Jason describes the solutions and its benefits. Read it here:

<http://provideocoalition.com/adobe/story/mtv-music-group-revolutionizes-red-carpet-workflow>

Contact MediaSilo

Solution Name	MTV Live Event Workflow
Company	MediaSilo
Phone	+1 917 817 0844
Address	207 South Street, 4 th Floor, Boston, MA, 02111
Website	http://www.mediasilo.com
Author	Joseph Foxtan, VP Strategy, MediaSilo