

## Dalet News Suite at TMZ

The Thirty Mile Zone (TMZ) combined the immediacy of breaking news with the production values of a magazine format to expand its popular website into a successful HD syndicated show.

The website TMZ.com had already attracted a huge following with its hip, flashy, usually irreverent, coverage of Hollywood celebrities when its creators contemplated a syndicated television version of the show. Many broadcast professionals wondered if and how the producers could transport the off-kilter, breakneck pace and "in your face" attitude of the website to television. But doubts were quickly cast aside when the brash, pioneering TMZ took to the airwaves. The weekday show, syndicated by Warner Bros. and carried by Fox affiliates across the US, is a hit with strong ratings, especially in the highly desirable younger demographic.

### the challenge

Build a cross-platform newsroom where speed is paramount

From the beginning, the TMZ team envisioned a cross-platform environment where material generated for either TV or web would be instantly available for both. Every facet of production—from field work to program delivery—would fit into a tapeless, collaborative, high definition workflow. Speed and timeliness would be paramount. Higher story counts with fast, short, back-to-back video snippets would put heavy demands on the production and playout systems. Show creators married their web mindset and innovative newsgathering with the systems know-how and integration expertise of National TeleConsultants (NTC) to build a new, flexible infrastructure and production center for TMZ, the television show.

### the solution

A digital production system with a Media Asset Management engine

David Potter, Director of Software Systems for NTC, was responsible for defining the workflow and systems integration for the TMZ operation. "It was a unique set of requirements," said Potter. "They operate with a short time to air; very dynamic and responsive to changing stories, but

their audience demands heavy production values. It's very graphics intensive." TMZ straddles a traditional newsroom with a magazine format, requiring stronger production values than a news show but with heightened immediacy.

Dalet News Suite was selected as the newsroom system and production hub for the TMZ television and web enterprise. "As we looked at the industry for asset management and newsroom computer systems," said Potter, "we found that Dalet really provided the most complete solution to TMZ needs, especially when considering their HD requirements." At TMZ, Dalet News Suite provides the essential elements for production and playout right on the desktop, including ingest control, media asset management, desktop proxy editing, scripting, rundown management and playout control. It offers tight integration with the Apple Final Cut Pro systems used for craft editing and also enables the multi-platform production capability that TMZ required.



Based in Los Angeles, TMZ covers the Thirty Mile Zone located around Hollywood.

During the morning meeting, the line-up is entered using Dalet News Suite scheduling tools which coordinate production right through to feed time. The show is only a half hour in duration, but the newsgathering is round-the-clock. Web producers who received special video training are in the field with Apple MacBook laptops and Sony Z1U camcorders. They make the rounds of the Hollywood night scene looking for celebrity sightings. In the predawn hours, tapes are dropped off at TMZ where they are ingested into the Dalet News Suite system and metadata is added. Producers then make rough cuts on low bit rate proxies at Dalet workstations which are connected to central storage via the Ethernet network. They can search the TMZ content catalogue for relevant wires, copy, video and stills as they script their stories

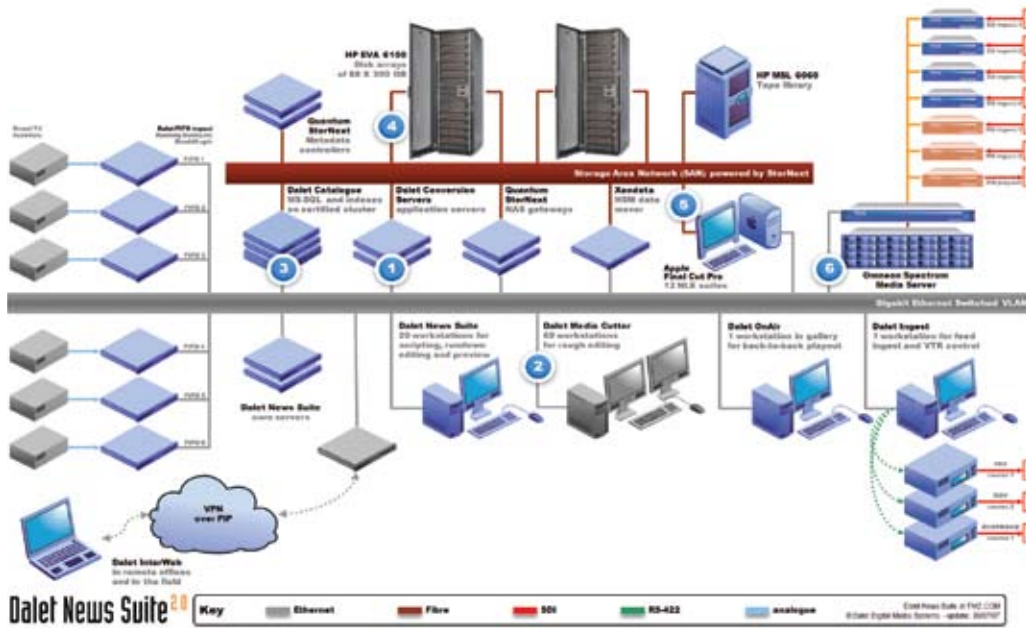
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David Potter  
Director of Software systems  
National TeleConsultants

www.dalet.com



**workflow overview**

During ingest or file transfer of HD material, low bit rate proxies are generated on the fly by Dalet Conversion servers (1) and available to all authorized Dalet workstations (2) for browsing and shot selections. All material is tracked by the Dalet Content Catalogue running on Microsoft SQL (3) and stored on HP EVA disk arrays (4) that are connected to a Storage Area Network (SAN) which is also shared by Apple Final Cut Pro workstations (5). Media for playout is seamlessly migrated by Dalet News Suite from the SAN to the Omneon Spectrum Media server (6).

and voice-overs. Producers select shots then send the corresponding Edit Decision Lists (EDL) to a craft editor, who produces the finished HD piece using Apple Final Cut Pro. Finished stories are saved to a folder on the network; stories are automatically referenced back into Dalet and transferred to the Omneon playout server. Most finished packages are immediately posted on the web along with other relevant photos and clips.

The first satellite feed of the show, which is down-converted to SD to meet the needs of most affiliates, begins at 1 PM Pacific time and some affiliates carry it live. Because Dalet News Suite provides dynamic coordination between the rundown and the Omneon playout server, updates to upcoming segments are frequently added even during playout. Throughout the afternoon, new contributions are added to the show, ensuring that subsequent regional feeds include the latest news.

**the benefits**

Affordability, speedy workflow and an open infrastructure

Dalet News Suite brings tremendous advantages to the production of TMZ, including simultaneous multi-platform production for both broadcast and web. With desktop tools for scripting, video ingest, metadata insertion and rough-cut editing available right at the desktop, editors and producers using Dalet News Suite handle their assignments with speed and efficiency. Most staffers had no previous experience with newsroom computer systems, but adapted easily to the straight-forward Dalet interfaces. The asset management functions of Dalet News Suite allow TMZ to leverage their content for upcoming shows, web and archival uses. The system's advanced rundown management offers great flexibility, allowing each story to be managed individually. The dynamic rundown coordination and playout control with Dalet News Suite ensures that even last minute updates for regional feeds are executed flawlessly.

NTC's David Potter expects that many aspects of the TMZ operation will be used as a pattern for future systems architecture in media facilities. *"It was especially important,"* said Potter, *"to get the customer involved right from the start so that the desired workflow was fully understood; then, we needed to be sure the technology components were flexible enough to be configured properly to deliver the desired workflow."* He considered that the affordability, speedy workflow, and open infrastructure were particularly noteworthy aspects of the TMZ operation.

**infrastructure**

- 90 Dalet workstations
- 12 Apple Final Cut Pro edit suites
- HP server infrastructure
- Quantum StorNext on HP StorageWorks EVA (24TB)
- Omneon Media Spectrum with 7 Omneon Media ports
- Xendata digital video archive running HP MSL 6060 tape library



for more information, visit [www.dalet.com/news-suite](http://www.dalet.com/news-suite)