

special effects*



* How we meet the most demanding creative needs, from one of the world's most pioneering post production and special effects facilities.

Imagine the scene. A group of work friends are gathered in a bar to watch the Super Bowl. While others in the bar watch the game avidly, this group chat and buy drinks. But at every commercial break, their attention is riveted to the screen and they cheer certain commercials as wildly as if a touchdown had been scored. This group are from The Mill, delighted to see their work featured in the high point of the advertising industry's year.

Creating commercials may appear glamorous; but the geographic spread of the industry, the inherent creativity and the fierce time pressures make it a very hard place in which to survive, let alone succeed.

The Mill is one of the leading post production and special effects facilities in the world, having shot to fame with an Oscar for its work in 'Gladiator'. The Mill now specialises in commercials and is based in both Soho, London and SoHo (South of Houston), New York, the advertising agency capitals of the world. In the run-up to the other greatest show on earth (ie the World Cup), the company

was busier in the first half of 2006 than at any time in its 16 year history.

Complexity simplified

As Roy Trosh, The Mill's technical director, explains, coping with this workload challenge revolves around being able to work in tandem on both sides of the Atlantic. "After the experiences of file delivery by planes and ISDN in the mid-90s, we were early adopters in our industry of virtual private network technology, to get the benefits of speed and reliability." As creative demands grew, so too did the need for a network supplier that could measure up to The Mill's requirements.

In July 2004, The Mill implemented a VPN from Interoute between London and New York. "We had to find a supplier that understands the intensity of our industry – not to mention the demands of creatives – and, at the same time, has real network quality at a fair price. Interoute has that combination." The Mill added redundant links in 2005 and is planning to upgrade the primary connection between London and New York to 1Gb in the near future.

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Commercials are shot on film and, following processing, are converted to high quality video via telecine systems. Creatives in London and New York want to see the playout from the telecine systems at the same time. Using the Interoute service, The Mill provides remote telecine so that directors and creatives in New York can not only edit but even do grading (colouring) in London and vice versa. “We’re doing 12Mb streaming of MPEG2 files. It’s undoubtedly leading edge video post production yet I think we increasingly see it as business-as-usual. It’s a sophisticated solution that works very straightforwardly, particularly as far as the users are concerned,” adds Trosh.

Growing success

The final stage of creating the video output, known as rendering, is hugely computer intensive and is another area that The Mill has turned to Interoute for. “We were finding the power and air conditioning demands of the growing bank of computers at both locations increasingly difficult to accommodate. We have more than 140 render licenses and, as we are

doing a lot of animation work, we need the capability to flex as and when particular projects dictate.”

The Mill now have a third render farm at Interoute’s managed hosting facility in London’s Docklands, linked via a 1Gb connection, enabling The Mill to increase rendering throughput significantly without worrying about the environmental considerations. It also provides a convenient route for off-site backup, an important benefit in terms of insurance and, equally important to a growing company such as The Mill, corporate governance.

With several major awards scooped in 2006 and the commercials industry seemingly at its feet, what problems does The Mill have left to overcome? “Managing burgeoning client expectations is perhaps something of a growing issue,” comments Trosh. Directors, enamoured with remote telecine between New York and London, would increasingly like to be able to have the facility wherever they happen to be. “Directors are not noted for being overly reasonable people,” he wryly observes.

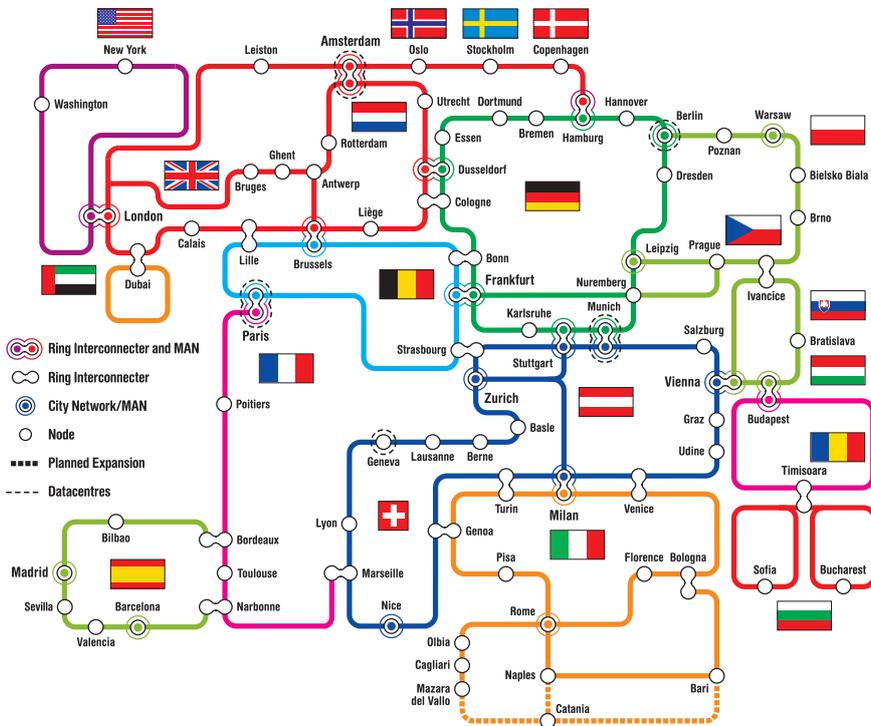
The Interoute VPN provides The Mill with:

- A 100% MPLS cloud (ie with no SDH) for outstanding class and quality of service, delivering enhanced traffic prioritisation.
- Non-contended access across the all-fibre Interoute network.
- A fully managed service; 24 x 365 pro-active network management and monitoring.
- Internet access over the same infrastructure.

Interoute’s Managed Hosting service offers:

- Disaster-ready location with emergency generators and back-up systems.
- Security for data – a virtual LAN architecture keeps The Mill’s hosted environment totally separate from other customers’ environments.
- Full management and with a web-based interface for easy monitoring by The Mill.

Interoute network



Five things about Interoute

- We own and operate Europe's most advanced, densely connected voice and data network.
- We're widely acknowledged as one of Europe's fastest growing technology companies.
- Our network covers almost every major European business centre, (Central and Eastern Europe included) as well as the USA.
- We handle more than €1 billion of e Commerce through our data centres every day, making Interoute a key part of Europe's Digital Supply Chain.
- We're the choice of all key European operators, governments around the world and 14,000 corporate customers including BMW, EMI and Deutsche Post.

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This information was correct
at the time of going to press.
However, because of the rapid
growth of Interoute's business,
details are likely to change.
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