



Success Story

Fostering the Speed of Collaboration for Award-Winning VFX



Since its founding in 2004, Lola Visual Effects (Lola VFX) has pioneered new techniques for subtle yet transformative visual effects work. From digitally altering actors' appearances to seamless face replacements, Lola VFX brings filmmakers' visions to life.

The media and entertainment industry is going through generational changes. As the industry evolves, the supporting infrastructure needs to evolve as well. As Edson Williams, Founder of Lola VFX explained, "Our system wouldn't play back 4K footage in real-time. It was taking too long to play back. This impacts actors' time, all our employees' time and my time."

Challenge

Massive and Growing Data

The volume of visual data is expanding exponentially as film and television continue to shift to higher resolutions like 4K, 6K, and even 8K. A single project can involve terabytes of raw, high-resolution footage. For example, on a typical shoot day, Lola VFX may capture a dozen or more reels of 6K footage amounting to multiple terabytes of data.

This volume strains productivity in several ways. First, transferring the enormous footage from on-set storage into central infrastructure creates a bottleneck. High-speed ingest is critical so that post-production can begin as soon as possible. Second, sharing these massive files between globally distributed VFX artists becomes prohibitively slow. Reviewing and annotating relevant clips is key for collaboration. Finally, real-time playback of high-res content for approvals, comps, and other reviews is essential. Constant caching bogs down workflows.

Executive Producer Will Anderson added, "Our infrastructure should foster the speed of collaboration, allowing artists around the globe to work together in near real-time."

Details

Industry

Media & Entertainment

Use Case

Animation & Visual Effects

About Us

VAST is the data platform for simplicity at scale. VAST engineered the first new scale-out architecture in 20 years to take you beyond the conventional limits of scale, resilience and cost.

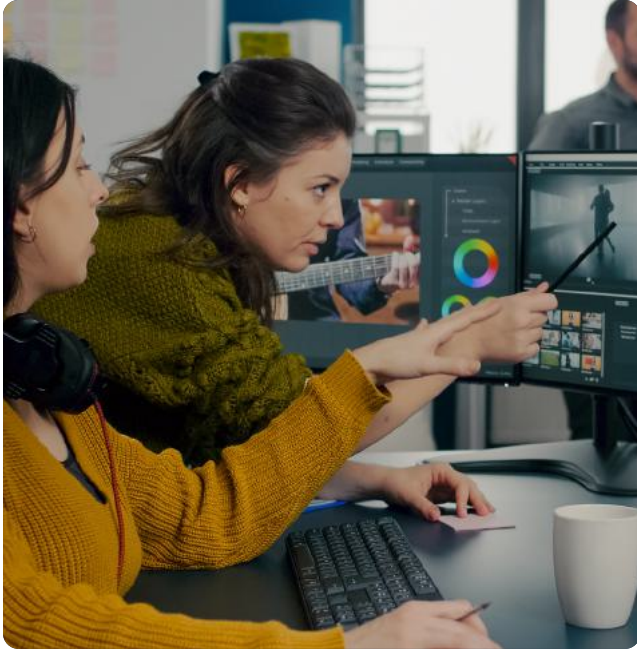
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"VAST exceeded our expectations. I initially estimated a 24-36 month ROI, but now 15-18 months is a more accurate ROI due to our overall productivity and efficiency gains"

Edson Williams
Founder, Lola VFX





Seeking a Shared High-Performance Platform

To accelerate collaboration, Lola VFX needed to consolidate all of their data on a high-speed shared data platform accessible to artists globally. After evaluating options, they selected the VAST Data DataStore for its performance, scale, and multiprotocol capabilities. The VAST Data Platform is composed of several components including a DataStore, DataBase, DataSpace and DataEngine.

Williams explained their stringent demands: “The current way of doing things would not work anymore. We have very high expectations because our use case is so extreme. We push systems harder than almost any environment I’ve ever seen.”

He continued, “VAST exceeded our expectations. I initially estimated a 24–36 month ROI, but now 15–18 months is a more accurate ROI due to our overall productivity and efficiency gains.”

Solution

Accelerating Productivity

By eliminating playback delays, VAST Data accelerated shot review, approvals, and collaboration. Artists globally can now work together in real-time on large files. The high throughput and scale-out architecture overcomes the ingest, sharing, and playback challenges posed by soaring data sizes.

Lola utilizes Autodesk Flame in its film editing process and Lola has 60 Flames globally with 40 Flames at its Los Angeles office. With VAST, 60 Flame artists are able to collaborate together on one platform with an aggregate throughput of 64 gigabytes a second. Williams elaborated, “All our artists in Los Angeles can play back 4K in real-time on the VAST Data Platform. In the past, we had to RAM cache each shot, taking 3–4 seconds each. That adds up with 60–100 shots per day in review.”

He added, “The speed of collaboration between artists is more important than backup. VAST makes it seamless to share data in 10ths of seconds, versus a labyrinth of copying before.”

The software-defined architecture also streamlines administration. “It takes less labor to manage than our old systems,” Anderson noted. “I can play back, collaborate, and finish more work in less time now.”

One unexpected benefit to Lola was the data reduction ratio. Anderson remarked, “The amount of compression we got was 2:1 on data which does not usually experience that level of data reduction.”

Global Access and Growth

In addition to their Los Angeles facility, Lola VFX operates sites in London and Nebraska to tap into worldwide talent. VAST Data's ultra-efficient global namespace will enable seamless collaboration across all locations.

Williams remarked, "I'm excited to use VAST as a global file system based on our success so far. It will cut our ROI even further as we expand."

He explained, "Currently, artists are stationed near hubs to minimize lag when using pen tablets. With VAST, an artist in New Zealand can work on Los Angeles-based media with low latency." By providing a unified global namespace, VAST Data removes geographic barriers that impede collaboration. Artists anywhere can access media assets in real-time.



"The Media and Entertainment industry is going through a generational shift. VAST is helping us adapt to these industry changes and make our company more productive and profitable."

Edson Williams
Founder, Lola VFX



Results

Enabling New Creative Possibilities

Beyond accelerating today's workflows, VAST Data is unlocking new potential. The platform's robust metadata services and global namespace will enable breakthroughs like automated asset tracking.

"We could integrate our production systems like ShotGrid to orchestrate work and data movement based on artist schedules and locations," explained Williams. "That automation isn't possible today, but will be transformative."

The VAST Data platform removes data management burdens, letting Lola VFX focus on their creative craft. As Williams concluded, "The Media and Entertainment industry is going through a generational shift. VAST is helping us adapt to these industry changes and make our company more productive and profitable."

About Lola VFX Group

Lola provides character driven special effects and traditional visual effects for feature films and television. The company is paving the way for a new level of story-telling with innovative visual effects: taking decades off Michael Douglas in "Ant-Man" (he could easily once again play the leads in Fatal Attraction and Basic Instinct), transforming Chris Evans into a 90-pound weakling for Captain America: The First Avenger, twinning Armie Hammer as Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss in The Social Network, and "youthifying" Brad Pitt in The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.