CASE STUDY

Cinelab Film & Digital
Empowering high-resolution film workflows with ERA's storage and infrastructure solutions

BACKGROUND

Cinelab Film & Digital is the UK's only full-service film laboratory and digital post-production facility, supporting filmmakers from capture through to final delivery. With services spanning film processing, scanning, colour grading, editorial, finishing and secure data management, Cinelab plays a pivotal role in feature films, episodic TV, commercials and archive projects.

To keep pace with rapidly growing production demands, Cinelab partnered with ERA to expand its storage infrastructure and deliver the performance, scalability and reliability required for today's data-intensive media workflows.

CHALLENGES

As Cinelab expanded its services and took on increasingly ambitious projects, the demands on its infrastructure grew significantly. Higher resolutions, complex film workflows, and tighter deadlines meant the existing setup could no longer deliver the speed or capacity required. What had once been sufficient for day-to-day operations was now creating bottlenecks that threatened productivity and client delivery.

Cinelab needed a storage environment that could keep pace with evolving industry standards and ensure uninterrupted collaboration across multiple departments working simultaneously on large, high-resolution files.

AT A GLANCE

THE CHALLENGES

- High-resolution bottlenecks
- Real-time access delays
- Rising HDR & 6K demands
- Limited scalability & reliability

THE SOLUTIONS

- High-performance tiered storage
- Legacy migration onto POLUS
- Tailored architecture & install support
- Responsive industry-expert support

THE RESULTS

- 40% faster data transfers
- Seamless high-res workflows
- Scalable, future-proof infrastructure
- Reduced downtime & energy use

Cinelab Film & Digital
Case Study

CHALLENGES CONTINUED

The main challenges included:

- **High Resolution Workflows:** Need to support two Scanity HDR scanners capturing 4K 16-bit DPX sequences at 18fps simultaneously.

- **Real-Time Access:** Colourists and dailies teams required instant access to rushes without delays or bottlenecks.

- **Industry Trends:** The Rising demand for HDR delivery, growing data volumes and the resurgence of 6K Vistavision workflows placed additional pressure on storage.

- **Scalability & Reliability:** Needed an infrastructure that could expand with production demands while ensuring stability and uninterrupted performance.

- **Performance:** Required consistent, high-speed performance to support demanding high-resolution, high-volume production workflows.

Cinelab needed a partner who could not only deliver the technical infrastructure but also understood the unique demands of film scanning and high-end finishing.

THE SOLUTION

Cinelab turned to ERA, already a trusted partner providing storage and support services. ERA offered a proven, cost-effective architecture and deep knowledge of media workflows. Recommendations from industry colleagues and other post facilities reinforced Cinelab's confidence in the decision.

ERA's ability to tailor the system to their specific needs and provide top-tier services was a key differentiator, giving Cinelab the assurance to expand the partnership. To address the growing demands, ERA delivered a tailored solution including:

Flexible.Fast.Efficient

THE SOLUTION

- **Primary High-Performance Storage:** Shared production storage and nearline systems including a Tiger server with 360 TB NVMe storage and 1 PB HDD capacity, supporting both film and digital workflows.

- **Legacy Migration:** Seamless migration of an existing legacy server onto ERA's POLUS system, facilitating the transfer of data from existing services to ensure continuity and efficiency.

- **Implementation Support:** ERA's engineers worked closely with Cinelab's internal team, providing detailed planning, on-site installation, thorough testing and a comprehensive migration plan.

- **Tiered Storage:** A flexible infrastructure balancing performance and capacity with secure data management.

"Performance, reliability, scalability & responsive support was critical for us. We needed a partner who understood the unique demands of film scanning & high-end finishing. Having a team we can trust, who we can call & speak with directly has been invaluable, making ERA support feel like a seamless extension of our own team".

Joshua Callis-Smith
Chief Technical Officer / Colourist
of **Cinelab Film & Digital**

CINELAB
FILM & DIGITAL

THE RESULTS

Since implementing ERA's solution, Cinelab has achieved significant improvements across operations:

- **Workflow Efficiency:** Bottlenecks eliminated, enabling simultaneous high-resolution scanning and real-time colour grading.

- **Faster Throughput:** Data transfer times reduced by up to 40%, improving delivery times for clients and allowing a significant increase in available bandwidth across suites.

- **Scalability:** Ready to manage growing volumes of high-resolution data, enabling Cinelab to take on more complex projects with tighter turnarounds.

- **Employee Satisfaction:** Colourist, dailies operators and scanning teams immediately noticed faster, more reliable performance. With previous limitations removed, they can now focus fully on the creative scanning process instead of managing technology.

- **Cost & Sustainability Benefits:** Increased productivity, reduced downtime, and a compact, energy-efficient design that saves rack space and reduces energy use.

With ERA as a trusted partner, Cinelab has the confidence that its infrastructure can evolve with industry demands while ensuring creativity and client delivery remain front and centre.

SUMMARY

By partnering with ERA, Cinelab Film & Digital has gained a future-proof storage infrastructure that streamlines workflows, supports the demands of high-resolution film scanning and enables faster, more reliable delivery for clients. The solution has already delivered measurable performance gains, such as up to 40% faster data transfer while reducing downtime and saving space and energy.

Flexible.Fast.Efficient

SUMMARY CONT...

Looking ahead , Cinelab plans to continue expanding capacity and integrating new technologies with ERA's support. With more productions choosing to shoot on film, the upgraded infrastructure ensures Cinelab is well-positioned to handle increasing volumes of high-resolution data while maintaining the tight turnaround times their clients depend on.

"ERA's solutions have transformed our workflows. The performance gains and reliability improvements have been immediately noticeable, enabling us to take on more complex projects with tighter turnarounds. Their team's understanding of the film and broadcast industry, coupled with their responsive support, makes them a trusted partner who feels like an extension of our own team. Knowing our data infrastructure is secure and future-proof allows us to focus on creative excellence".

Joshua Callis-Smith
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