



Spotlight

VectorWorks
Spotlight Helps
The Daily Show
Deliver on Cue

VectorWORKS®



The new set for The Daily Show with Jon Stewart had to be engineered, built, and assembled in just six weeks. With VectorWorks Spotlight's help, blackwalnut was quick with the comeback.

Blackwalnut is a full-service fabrication company that specializes in scenic environments for the broadcast industry. In other words, they build TV sets—TV sets for ABC, CBS, NBC, ESPN, CNBC, The Game Show Network, Comedy Central, and more.

Budgets can exceed \$1 million, and broadcast environments can consist of up to 10,000 square feet of scenery to produce—in as little as six weeks. That's how much time blackwalnut had to engineer, build, and assemble a new set for Comedy Central's Emmy and Peabody Award-winning The Daily Show with Jon Stewart. Jack Morton/PDG designed the set in VectorWorks and handed the VectorWorks drawings over to blackwalnut to produce a 3D model and construction drawings for fabrication.

Today's top story: smooth workflow

The objective was to create a high-tech set that looked like the news shows The Daily Show parodies, complete with LED lighting, LED tickers, and rear-projection capabilities.

According to Jacob Gendelman, managing partner of blackwalnut, it was an extremely ambitious and technology-intensive environment to complete in such a short time frame. But the firm was able to handle the project with no problems, with the help of VectorWorks Spotlight.

"There was an enormous amount of technology integrated into The Daily Show set, which translated into a lot of elements we had to contend with quickly," says Gendelman. "Having a smooth workflow and being able to work efficiently with everyone involved was essential to our success on this project—and is essential for success on every project, really—and that's where VectorWorks comes in."



The spin on collaboration

VectorWorks is the only solution for blackwalnut, because the firm uses both VectorWorks and AutoCAD®. But everyone is able to work together using VectorWorks, thanks to its superior DXF/DWG file translation capabilities.

"We pride ourselves on our collaborative approach with our clients and in our fabrication shop here," says Gendelman. "Anything that can enhance our ability to work hand-in-glove with our designers and our shop is going to help us immensely. Being able to take the sketches our designers create in VectorWorks and translate them into workable construction drawings is absolutely the most important step in our process. It has to happen quickly and accurately. Our drafting people go back and forth between VectorWorks and AutoCAD all the time, and, if we didn't have a smooth transition, we'd be dead in the water."



The proof is in the precision

Blackwalnut also produces 3D models of each set it builds using VectorWorks, generating the 3D models from the designers' 2D drawings.

"We create 3D models to see how everything fits together," explains Gendelman. "We build them here and take them apart to make sure everything works. Then we reassemble them onsite. Essentially, we're building a giant jigsaw puzzle, so the successful 3D integration of units is critical to ensuring everything will turn out correctly."

He adds, "Because we're building giant interlocking pieces with the CNC router, we need to be accurate to within 1/32 of an inch. VectorWorks has no problem with accuracy."

And there's no room for error when the set is assembled onsite, either.



The show must go on—quickly

The Daily Show went dark for a week to give blackwalnut, the production crew, and the lighting crew time to get the new set up and running. The sheet layer capabilities in VectorWorks help blackwalnut keep information organized, so assembling the set isn't such a puzzle.

"Having a master drawing to work from helps keep us organized and up to date," says Gendelman. "Otherwise, we'd have hundreds of different drawings, and we'd never be able to tell which was which. There could be thousands of elements to a set, so we use VectorWorks' sheet layers to break out specific details, such as construction

techniques and assembly instructions for individual parts, all the time."

He continues, "When the time comes to put the set together onsite—when we're often up against the clock—we can refer to our VectorWorks drawings and know exactly what to do. With The Daily Show, we were working alongside the lighting and production crews, and Jon Stewart, as well. So we couldn't afford to miss a beat, and VectorWorks kept us on track right up until air time."

