Industry

Media and entertainment

Challenge

Restore, digitize, and catalog 2,725 episodes of Late Night with Conan O'Brien NBC TV shows stored over 25 years on aging, diverse, and obsolete tape formats.

Solution

> Iron Mountain Data Restoration and Migration Services

> Iron Mountain Entertainment Services

> AWS storage and services

Value

> Preserve and unify 25 years of Conan O'Brien NBC TV shows

> Store 2,725 episodes in a future-proof digital format

> Implement a way to view and catalog each episode

> Share historical footage with fans to enjoy

> Prevent loss of content due to video format and equipment obsolescence

> Reduction in costs for storage and time for data retrieval

> Reduced labor and operational costs

IRON MOUNTAIN®

TEAMCOCO

Making millions of Conan O'Brien fans even happier

After 25 years on TV, Conan O'Brien took action to digitize, preserve, store, and organize a vault of aging, diverse show tapes, allowing fans to enjoy their favorite moments again.

Conan O'Brien is a master at making us laugh. His 25+ year run in late-night talk shows is a testament to O'Brien's standout comedic talent and wit.

In advance of his 25th TV anniversary, O'Brien decided to preserve the "Late Night with Conan O'Brien" NBC archives. O'Brien asked Team Coco, his production team, to take on the task of digitzing, storing and organizing 2,725 shows, which were stored on a diverse range of aging, physical tape formats.

Converting, restoring, and digitizing these tapes also had to be done securely, and in record time, so that special episode highlights could be shared with fans in celebration of O'Brien's 25th anniversary, a project dubbed Conan25.

Team Coco turned to Iron Mountain to help achieve this monumental task.

Moving tapes safely from NBC to Iron Mountain

NBC let Team Coco and Iron Mountain borrow 2,725 NBC tape archives of "Late Night with Conan O'Brien". Using special Iron Mountain packaging, the tapes were crated up and readied for transport. The boxes were safely and securely transported from the NBC vaults to the Iron Mountain Entertainment Services (IMES) facility in Los Angeles, California.

"At Team Coco, we had never faced a challenge like this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," shares Team Coco. "The scope and scale of the digitizing, storing, transcoding, and cataloging was impossible for our small team at Team Coco to handle using traditional on-premises." Iron Mountain solved that challenge for Team Coco.

Managing diverse and obsolete formats

Once the O'Brien tapes arrived at IMES in Los Angeles, they were organized to reveal various formats, including Betacam-SP, D-2, D-3, MPEG-IMX, HDCAM, HDCAM-SR.

Because the "Late Night with Conan O'Brien" recordings started with NBC in the 1990s, the first 1,629 shows were captured on D-3, an early composite digital tape format that is now obsolete. Around the world, there are only a few D-3 players left in existence that can play back the D-3 tapes at acceptable quality levels.

Luckily, Conan25 saved these archived tapes from extinction. Iron Mountain procured D-3 players and successfully digitized the 1,629 shows, alongside the remaining 871 tapes in various other formats.

"Every restoration and digitization project is bespoke," says Paul Luppino, Director of Data Management and Restoration Services at Iron Mountain. "Beyond the unique formats, each tape can vary in how it was written and the order of the writing. Iron Mountain is uniquely suited to handle those variations, as well as a wide range of obscure and obsolete tape types."

Obsolescence solved in the "Iron Mountain Boneyard"

Iron Mountain has an impressive collection of video equipment to cover a wide variety of tape formats. Because technology is constantly and rapidly changing, Iron Mountain acquires and keeps hardware that might be needed to restore and preserve obsolete and obscure video formats today, and in the future.

At Iron Mountain, its expansive equipment collection is spread across several locations and affectionately referred to as the "Iron Mountain Boneyard." Ironically, the Iron Mountain Boneyard allows content to be digitized and take on a much longer — and potentially forever — lifespan.

But this equipment also comes with Iron Mountain know-how and expertise. Engineers need to understand the various video formats and equipment, maintain equipment that is out of service, and utilize a unique array of skills to digitize content. Simply put, having the right equipment gets part of the job done, but without the right hands-on experience and know-how, projects can stall and fail. For Team Coco, the Iron Mountain expertise made the impossible possible.

Success!

"The Iron Mountain team successfully converted 100% of the 'Late Night with Conan O'Brien' videos, from 1990 to the present. Despite the pressures of tight deadlines, and a large volume of specialized work, the project was completed on time, safely, and with high-quality outcomes," states Luppino. Fans can see clips of favorite moments on the Conan Classic website. "Our success was built on the ideal combination of access to obscure equipment, unique technology know-how, and a dedication to deliver for our customers, Team Coco and Conan O'Brien."

Read about Iron Mountain Entertainment Services.

Learn more about Iron Mountain Data Restoration and Migration Services.

See the Conan Classic website showcasing clips from the digitized videos. New snippets are also shared regularly across Team Coco's social media accounts.

Read the Amazon write-up by Team Coco.

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About Iron Mountain