

# KKYK goes virtual with Discreet Logic/Delvin

*Little Rock station revamps news set and graphics equipment*

By Karen Anderson

**W**hen KKYK(TV) Little Rock, Ark., started its news operations last year, its set was "acceptable but boring," says the station's chief operating officer, Neal Ardman. Building a new hard set would be costly in itself, but in order to give the news programs an updated and polished look, the station also would have to upgrade its graphics systems. So Ardman began shopping around for virtual sets.

The WB affiliate chose Discreet Logic's Frost broadcast graphics and virtual set system with Devlin Design Group's SoftSet virtual studio design and service system working with Silicon Graphics Onyx-2 workstations.

The \$1 million system combines SoftSet's library of virtual set designs with Discreet Logic's Frost real-time 3-D broadcast graphics. According to Dan Devlin, Devlin CEO and creative director, KKYK can choose six set designs for sports, business, interviews, election coverage and other uses.

Doug Krile, KKYK news director and anchor, says: "The creativity is the biggest advantage. It absolutely removes all of the boxes. ... You no longer think [of just] over-the-shoulder graphics for your talent."

KKYK's set will incorporate video walls that can display live video from remote feeds or tapes. "You have to completely rethink everything you know about the way things are supposed to look," Krile says.

He attributes the set's realistic look to Devlin's use of computer generated models of its hard sets. "When you look at most of the virtual sets ... around, my definition of them is cartoonish," Krile says.

Ardman agrees: "[The other sets] looked surreal. [The talent] looked like they were in a video game."

Ardman says that Devlin and Discreet Logic were the only companies to offer solid solutions for integrating the set into its existing DVCPRO format and Kavouris weather system. "It wasn't



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vanorware; it really worked."

To offset the cost of the new set, the station plans to make it available for outside projects, such as music video and commercial production. Ardman says he believes the system eventually will pay for itself, but not for several years.

Krile says it was an economically smart decision because the station needed to replace an old video switcher and

upgrade its graphics equipment. "By the time you buy new a switcher, upgrade the Chyron and add the effects—compare the price," he says. "That's where it begins to be cost-effective for us."

And from the perspective of on-air talent he says, "I'm thrilled to death with it."

The set is lit with a Videssence fluorescent lighting system, which eliminates excess heat. "Sitting under fluorescent light makes a spectacularly easier environment to work in," Krile says.

And although anchors sit at a blue desk surrounded by blue walls, the set offers them a relatively natural feel when they are anchoring, says Krile. The toughest part, he says, is learning to walk around in this virtual world and deal with perspective. In the virtual environment, an anchor standing within two feet of a co-anchor may appear on screen to be across the room.

The new set is slated to make its debut today (Oct. 5).

## Mississippi ETV Goes DTV with Acrodyne

When Jackson, Miss., NBC affiliate WLBT(TV)'s transmitter tower collapsed last October, PBS affiliate WMPN-TV, which leased space there, was displaced. The Mississippi Authority for ETV station was forced to find a new transmission site and to buy a new transmitter.

Last week the station took delivery of an Acrodyne AuD-2S solid-state 2000W DTV transmitter. (Acrodyne had lent the station a 1 kw transmitter in the interim.) The 2.5 kw digital transmitter and Janpro side-mounted panel antenna are on a 300 foot self-supporting tower at ETV's production center in Jackson.

The station also has ordered an EFData SDM-2020 digital satellite video demodulator which will receive and feed PBS digital signals to a Nucomm DVB-to-SMPTE 310 converter. A Zenith 8 VSB modulator will output a 9.4 Mb/s serial digital signal to the transmitter.

Martin Mangold, Mississippi ETV director of telecommunications, says the station initially will broadcast 1080i HDTV passthrough programming from PBS and plans to multicast beginning early next year. WMPN-TV also is preparing to provide original HDTV programming and is awaiting its FCC license to begin digital transmission.

If the station receives its permit in time, it will participate in PBS DTV week starting Nov. 11. PBS will provide one SDTV program full time with one 1080i HDTV prime time event. The network also will send two feeds with multiple 480i SDTV and time-delayed HDTV. All 1080i HDTV content will originate from a Sencore file server, and SDTV content will originate from Hewlett-Packard servers.

—Karen Anderson