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Clark Media Sold on Cobalt Reliability

by Gary Snyder
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BETHLEHEM, PA.

Clark Media rents custom SD and HD flypack systems for broadcast, corporate and entertainment clients. We have numerous customer requirements and as a means of satisfying these, we've standardized on a design for our multiple flypack systems with Cobalt Digital's cards and openGear frames.

All Clark Media systems are built into shock-mounted equipment containers, with the rear of the cases equipped with high-density BNC input/output panels for fast connections in the field.

NEEDED SOLID CARDS

For the kinds of applications for which we deploy gear, it goes without saying that we have to have equipment that's solid and reliable under some rough travel conditions. We've found that Cobalt equipment is extremely reliable. Their card frames also provide good airflow, which is important with any digital equipment, and especially in sometimes cramped field conditions.

Cobalt's 9003 and 9004 series of HD-SDI d.a.s have been especially useful to us in our flypack design. These cards can be configured for single 1x8 or dual 2x4 applications, and we have a choice of reclocking or non-reclocking of inputs as required by the user's specific production requirements.

Although, we operate primarily with SD and HD SDI signals, we still have a need for analog distribution. We were happy to find that Cobalt offers a traditional analog d.a. that plugs into openGear frames as Cobalt's digital products. This analog model is the Cobalt 9232, and we use these for distribution of all reference signals, timecode and any other composite signals needed.

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All of our camera systems are provided with Cobalt 9821 HD/SD SDI downconverters, for even though our clients desire 16:9 HD for most applications, we still need downconverted video for monitoring and SD recording. We particularly like the Cobalt feature that provides control of the cards via onboard switch settings or through Cobalt's DashBoard software.

We use DashBoard to control all parameters of the various Cobalt products we use in our larger systems. The DashBoard software is easy to operate as it's very intuitive. Since many of the parameter adjustments are also available on edge-mounted controls, we also use cards in local mode for some of our smaller systems.

We also use Cobalt's OGCP-9000 dedicated control panel to provide our engineers with full access from a dedicated interface panel.

Another handy feature that seems to be only available with the Cobalt 9821 downconverter is its ability to also perform aspect ratio conversion of both HD and SD signals.

We recently provided one of our high-definition multicamera packages to the MLB Network for the World Series games at Yankee Stadium. Our main system cube provided routing and fiber delivery of all of their signals back to the MLB Network's New Jersey location. Space was at a premium and it was a real advantage to be able to pack 80 HD-SDI 1x4 d.a.s into 8-RU. As can be imagined, reliability was a major consideration on this job, as no second takes were possible, and our Cobalt Digital products were their usual rock steady selves, never missing a beat.

Gary Snyder is the president/engineer at Clark Media. He may be contacted at garyS@clarkmedia.com.

For additional information, contact Cobalt Digital at 800-669-1691 or visit www.cobaltdigital.com.

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