



Second City Communications A laugh a minute



Second City Communications
Chicago, Illinois
www.secondcitycommunications.com

Visual communications firm replaces Apple Final Cut Pro with Adobe® Premiere® Pro and Creative Suite® Production Premium to bring familiar hijinks and hilarity to unfamiliar audiences faster

Fred Willard is an alumnus. So too are Alan Arkin, Stephen Colbert, Tina Fey, and Steve Carrell. Some the biggest names in comedy got their start at the world's premier comedy theater and school of improv: The Second City in Chicago.

For more than 50 years, The Second City has been delighting audiences with irreverent sketch comedy and improv performances. Today, the company is extending its off-the-cuff hilarity to new audiences through its corporate services arm, Second City Communications.

Greg Mulvey, lead editor and motion graphics designer, came to Second City Communications with knowledge of both Adobe Premiere® Pro and Final Cut Pro software. While the studio primarily used Final Cut Pro, Mulvey would often move projects into Adobe Premiere Pro, especially if they required heavy green screen editing in Adobe After Effects®.

"When it came time for Second City Communications to upgrade its NLE we looked at the available solutions and quickly realized that Adobe Creative Suite Production Premium, particularly Adobe Premiere Pro, could meet all of our video production needs with a fast, integrated workflow," says Mulvey.

Second City Communications' video development is fast paced and full of energy. Making the switch from Final Cut Pro to Adobe Premiere Pro has afforded the video editing team flexibility, enhanced functionality, and a streamlined and more collaborative workflow.



Challenges

- Standardizing and accelerating project workflows
- Enabling better collaboration and concurrent work among editors, motion graphics artists, and producers
- Delivering high-impact comedy content across platforms and formats for a variety of unconventional audiences

Solutions

- Deploy Adobe Premiere Pro to streamline video editing and production
- Leverage Adobe Audition[®] to bring audio editing and refinement in house
- Incorporate Adobe Encore[®] and Media Encoder to deliver content across multiple platforms and media formats

Benefits

- Cut hours off editing and production timelines
- Enabled concurrent sound, video, and motion graphics editing
- Enhanced collaboration among writers, editors, designers, and producers
- Supported updating and re-release of previously produced projects
- Promoted creativity and risk taking

A unique approach

Second City Communications is a full-service video production agency. In addition to handling video responsibilities for the theater troupe, the company works with brand-name clients that include national insurance underwriters, pro sports leagues, and technology leaders to produce high-quality, engaging, and entertaining short-form videos.

Videos range from business training presentations and brand advertisements to ostensible public service announcements. The company adopted Adobe Creative Suite Production Premium to accelerate its production processes, using Adobe Premiere Pro and After Effects to integrate workflows and deliver higher-quality projects faster.

"Nothing about the way we work is conventional except for the tools we use," says Mulvey. "Adobe Creative Suite Production Premium is essential to our ability to deliver smart, distinctive video projects that bring a bit of levity and comedy to otherwise boring topics."

In an average month, Second City Communications develops custom training and communications programs for three to four clients, producing approximately three to five short-form videos for each client. Clients turn to Second City Communications to produce lighter, comedic content, viral videos, interactive campaigns, and entertaining instructional or sales training programs.

Second City Communications' video development process is unique. Clients work with a producer and a writer to develop concepts, and have the option to build out creative scenarios with improv actors in a creative workshop. "Clients think it's a great way to create and flesh out ideas and see how they will translate into video," says Mulvey. "But it also adds steps to the production process, which means that post-production has to be fast and flawless."

Out with the old, in with the new

Switching from Final Cut Pro to Adobe Premiere Pro gives Second City Communications greater flexibility and enhanced functionality in its video editing processes, helping to streamline the creation of videos that strike the perfect pitch. The team appreciates how Adobe Premiere Pro enables editors to import previous projects edited with Final Cut Pro and share them seamlessly with internal and external colleagues through EditShare on various machines for better collaboration.

For example, a long-term client requested a refresh of a project edited in Final Cut Pro 7. The team decided to import the Final Cut Pro 7 project into Adobe Premiere Pro and found that everything transitioned exactly how it was cut. They were able to easily add in the new footage and save the project in the updated format.



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Greg Mulvey
Lead editor and motion graphics designer,
Second City Communications

“The built-in muscle memory from using Final Cut Pro for years meant that a learning curve was inevitable when it came to moving to Adobe Premiere Pro,” said C.J. Arellano, video editor, Second City Communications. “We were able to transition to Adobe Premiere Pro without any major issues, and we came to see that it was definitely the stronger editing suite, especially with the under-the-hood features that handle various footage formats and dialoguing with other post-production programs.”

Mulvey notes that it took about two weeks to fully transition and get everyone comfortable with how to use Adobe Premiere Pro software. “The first thing everyone noticed was how much faster Adobe Premiere Pro is than Final Cut Pro, and how they could continue to work efficiently by simply assigning Final Cut Pro keyboard and mouse shortcuts in Adobe Premiere Pro, enabling a seamless and familiar workflow,” he says.

Using Adobe Premiere Pro, motion graphics designers can find content on the server, work on specific graphics in After Effects, and instantly make them available to editors working in Adobe Premiere Pro. In addition, the Adobe solution fully supports multicam editing, which is important because The Second City films all of the theater’s main stage performances using a multicam setup.

The benefits of an integrated workflow

A large number of projects produced by Second City Communications involve green-screen shoots. Editors use the Dynamic Link feature to easily transfer files between After Effects and Adobe Premiere Pro, eliminating the need for intermediate file rendering, and get high-performance playback on Mac and PCs using the 64-bit Mercury Playback Engine. Mulvey also uses Dynamic Link to send files from Adobe Premiere Pro to Adobe Encore without rendering, and see any subsequent changes in the timeline reflected immediately in Encore.

In addition, editors benefit from the integration of Adobe Premiere Pro with Adobe Media Encoder software. “The ability to send sequences from Adobe Premiere Pro to Adobe Media Encoder to encode in the background while I keep editing is a huge time saver,” explains Mulvey.

The seamless workflows free Second City editors to be more creative with client projects. For example, one of the company’s short comedy video projects for its YouTube channel featured a massive, elaborate battle scene, complete with period-appropriate colors and sound quality to achieve the look and feel of a 1970s-style short film the director of photography envisioned.

Editors first used the Warp Stabilizer feature in After Effects to stabilize the video footage shot in a local park and imported it to Adobe Premiere Pro for editing. Using a Red Giant plugin for Adobe Premiere Pro, they adjusted colors to match the look and feel of a retro video and were able to play it back in real time. At the same time, they used After Effects for motion graphics and Adobe Audition to perfect the sound.

Editors working on green-screen shots save time using the Dynamic Link feature to transfer files between Adobe After Effects and Adobe Premiere Pro. Other time saving features such as Mercury Playback Engine and Adobe Media Encoder, provided editors the flexibility to be more creative with client projects and playback scenes immediately for feedback.



"Adobe Creative Suite Production Premium simplifies our workflows and enhances our production capabilities. Our writers, producers, and editors are now free to explore the boundaries of their creativity and continually push the envelope with high-impact comedic content worthy of the Second City name."

Greg Mulvey
Lead editor and motion graphics designer,
Second City Communications

Toolkit

Adobe Creative Suite Production Premium. Components used include:

- Adobe After Effects
- Adobe Premiere Pro
- Adobe Encore
- Adobe Audition
- Adobe Media Encoder

"In the past, we would have had to wait 30 minutes for the video to render out," says Mulvey. "With Mercury Playback Engine in Adobe Premiere Pro we can edit color and play the scenes back immediately for feedback and final cuts."

Pushing the comedic envelope

Second City Communications is living up to the name and reputation of the revered comedy troupe by producing unconventional video projects worthy of the Second City name. Using Adobe Creative Suite Production Premium software, the company has a suite of powerful solutions to bring zany concepts and hysterical character interactions to audiences in an array of environments through different media.

The company has created a number of effective and award-winning projects for national brands such as Farmers Insurance, that take full advantage of the power of Adobe Premiere Pro. For one Farmers project, the team shot the video in front of a green screen and used Adobe Premiere Pro to composite multiple elements to create the final shot, all in real time. The entire video was about 20 minutes. "In the past I would have had to do a project like this in After Effects, but being able to do it in real time with no rendering in Adobe Premiere Pro made the editing much faster and enabled more creative choices to be made," explains Mulvey.

Second City Communications also works with business thought leaders to create RealBiz Shorts, which are libraries of videos focused on topics such as ethics and compliance awareness. The videos take a humorous approach to training employees on key issues faced by businesses today. The latest addition to the RealBiz Shorts library is sales force training content, co-created with founding partners including Google, Pepsi, and MasterCard. All videos were edited using Adobe Premiere Pro software.

"Adobe Creative Suite Production Premium simplifies our workflows and enhances our production capabilities," says Mulvey. "Our writers, producers, and editors are now free to explore the boundaries of their creativity and continually push the envelope with high-impact comedic content worthy of the Second City name."

For more information

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