

# Radio World

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## TOP STUDIO BUILDOUTS

# INSIDE Motor Racing Network

by Tom Vernon

As “The Voice of NASCAR,” the Motor Racing Network completed a studio move last year from Daytona Beach, Fla., to Concord N.C., close to NASCAR headquarters in Charlotte.

MRN provides coverage of NASCAR races to more than 700 affiliates and produces segments for Sirius Satellite

screen entertainment.

“We did our first show out of here on Oct. 2, and have been doing two or three feeds a day ever since.”

MRN’s activities follow the NASCAR calendar, with off-season starting in late November; things geared up again full-force with the mid-February start of the 2008 NASCAR season.

The new facilities also include a heat-

were simplicity and consistency. “We wanted everything identical, so that once you train someone on one room, they can operate all the rooms,” he said. “The control rooms are mirror images of each other, and the edit suites are identical as well.”

Furniture was provided by Studio Technologies; the Media Technology Group served as acoustical consultants. Equipment was purchased through Crouse-Kimzey and Broadcasters General Store.



MRN Edit Station and Control Room

Radio’s NASCAR channel. As MRN Chief Engineer Doug Watson said, the new MRN headquarters already had a NASCAR heritage.

“Our new home is Darryl Waltrip’s old race shop, complete with garage and offices,” he said. “We built two identical control rooms and four audio edit suites for MRN.”

The space also includes three video editing rooms for Nextel Vision, a division of MRN delivering trackside on-

ed and air-conditioned garage large enough to house the two tractor trailers and other vehicles used for MRN’s remote broadcasts.

“We can do our regular and off-season maintenance indoors and without having to lug tools all over,” said Watson.

He and his engineering staff of two handled the studio construction themselves. From start to finish, the project took about two weeks.

Watson’s goals for the new facility

Major equipment includes Axia Element control surfaces, Telos Nx12 phone hybrids, an ESE master clock system, Tannoy Reveal studio monitors and Scott Studios (now Google) automation software.

Watson praised the plug-and-play nature of IP audio with the Axia consoles as a key ingredient to the fast studio build.

“Once we got the hang of it, one engineer was able to go from sealed boxes to

wired studio in about 40 minutes. The interconnecting hub is just five Cat-5 cables.” He added that the only soldering in the project was to build GPIOs for contact closures to signal affiliates.

Once Watson and his staff got the hang of programming with Axia’s Pathfinder software, they were able to do some creative engineering projects. One involved automated switching during solar outages. At the right time, Pathfinder switched from the satellite uplink to telephone hybrids and back after the outage

had passed.

MRN is a high-pressure, high-reliability operation so backups are essential. The primary signal feed is via a satellite uplink from MRN’s Concord, N.C., headquarters to ABC in New York, which takes care of distribution to affiliates. The backup is a Telos Xstream to New York. When all else fails a Comrex Vector is used, although Watson said this option has no contact closures, and is just a way of staying on the air.

The move also provided MRN with an

opportunity to memorialize two of its long-standing employees. MRN control room A also is known as the Barry Hall studio in honor of the lap-by-lap announcer who recently celebrated his 50th year at the mic. MRN control B is named the Harry Howard studio, in honor of MRN’s first engineer, who recently retired. Bronze plaques in the studios note the contributions of both men to the organization.

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