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Dirty Looks Future-Proofs Creative Workflows with Archiware P5

Dirty Looks, based in central London and Brussels, is one of the UK's most respected post-production companies, known for supporting independent filmmakers and high-end film and TV production. They specialise in colour grading, data handling, archiving, and workflow design. Working closely with cinematographers, DITs, and post teams across features, episodic drama, and commercials. Dirty Looks is a certified B Corp and, as part of its ongoing commitment to sustainability, the company measures and reports its environmental impact and is working to reduce energy consumption across its operations and services.

As part of their commitment to delivering reliable and future-ready solutions, Dirty Looks recently adopted Archiware P5, implementing both long-term LTO tape archiving and disk-based backup. The migration was supported by leading UK media systems integrator Escape Technology, who provided guidance and implementation support throughout the transition.

The Challenge

Like many media-focused businesses, Dirty Looks had built up a significant tape archive over many years, using a competing LTFS-based archive software product that no was no longer up to the task. As data volumes increased, the team sought a more scalable, centralised, and automated approach to managing their archive. LTO tape remains the only practical and cost-effective storage medium for long-term archiving of large media files, offering both durability and extremely low energy usage—making it the natural choice for organisations like Dirty Looks who are committed to reducing carbon emissions.

At the same time, their internal infrastructure – spanning several different storage servers – required a modern backup solution. Data protection had to be automatic, reliable, and fast to restore in the event of any hardware or software failure. Off-site disk storage was available to receive the backup data.

The biggest challenge: migrating a large library of LTFS-formatted LTO tapes written using their previous system, while ensuring uninterrupted access to the contents.

The Solution: Archiware P5

Following a consultation with Escape Technology, Dirty Looks chose Archiware P5 as their new data management platform. The decision was based on P5's strong reputation in the media industry, cross-platform support, and powerful tape and disk workflows.

The installation included two key modules:

P5 Archive – for long-term archiving to LTO tape via a multi-drive tape library, including import of existing LTFS tapes.

P5 Backup – for automated daily backups of live servers and critical project data to remote disk storage.

Why Archiware P5? Several factors made Archiware P5 the ideal solution for Dirty Looks:

1. **Importing Existing LTFS Tapes**
    A major driver for the project was Archiware P5's ability to import and index LTFS-formatted LTO tapes created using their previous system. This feature allowed Dirty Looks to preserve access to existing archived content without the need to re-write the data or keep the legacy software

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operational. Tapes were catalogued into P5's own archive database, making them fully searchable and restorable via P5's web interface.

2. **Browser-Based Access and Ease of Use**
   P5's intuitive web interface makes it easy for the Dirty Looks team to browse archive indexes, search for files, and trigger restores. The platform is designed to be usable by technical and non-technical staff alike.

3. **Automation and Scheduling**
   With P5 Backup, disk-based backups now run automatically on a schedule, with incremental updates and retention policies ensuring that data is securely protected without daily manual intervention.

4. **Cross-Platform Compatibility**
   Dirty Looks operate a mix of macOS and Linux-based systems. Archiware P5 runs natively on both, with reliable support for various filesystems and storage configurations.

5. **Scalability and Modularity**
   The modular structure of P5 allows it to scale with Dirty Looks' future needs – whether expanding the tape library, adding more disk-based backup targets, or integrating additional modules like P5 Synchronize for replication.

6. **Trusted Vendor Support**
   Archiware's responsive technical support and well-documented processes were another key factor, giving the team confidence in both day-to-day use and future expansion.

7. **Flexibility for future requirements and migrations**
   Archiware P5 Archive DLM (add-on module), adds powerful tiering, replication and migration features across LTO, cloud and disk storage, for all archived assets.

The Workflow in Practice

With Archiware P5 in place, Dirty Looks now manage their archive using a dedicated multi-drive LTO tape library. Data from completed and in-progress projects is archived to tape, complete with metadata and catalogue entries that allow for fast search and retrieval – all within the P5 web interface.

Legacy tapes originally written in LTFS format have been successfully imported into the system, ensuring continuity with past projects and long-term accessibility.

Separately, P5 Backup protects their production infrastructure through scheduled, incremental backups to disk storage. Snapshots are created within P5's index database, each time the backup runs. Recovery of files or entire folder structures can be performed quickly, and the system runs unattended, giving peace of mind without requiring daily effort.

The Results

Dirty Looks' deployment of Archiware P5 has delivered several tangible benefits:

Business Continuity: All legacy tapes remain accessible without depending on legacy software or manual mounting.

Operational Efficiency: Staff spend less time managing archive and backup, with automated jobs and centralised indexing.

Improved Resilience: Daily backups protect the business from data loss and speed up recovery when needed.

Client Confidence: With a modern archiving platform in place, Dirty Looks is well-positioned to support productions with long-term storage requirements.

Partnering with Escape Technology

Escape Technology played a crucial role in the transition, from solution design to implementation. As a long-standing Archiware reseller with deep experience in media workflows, Escape ensured a smooth deployment and provided best-practice advice tailored to Dirty Looks' specific needs.

Their involvement helped streamline the migration from LTFS, integrate P5 into existing infrastructure, and train the team to get the most from the platform.

Conclusion

For Dirty Looks, adopting Archiware P5 has transformed and optimized both their archiving and backup operations. The ability to migrate from an LTFS-based legacy system while preserving access to valuable data was key – and P5 delivered that with reliability and simplicity.

Now equipped with a scalable, cross-platform and professionally supported solution, Dirty Looks can continue to deliver expert post-production, colour, and data services to the film and TV industry—supporting filmmakers with robust, efficient, and sustainable workflows from shoot through to final delivery.

As data volumes and retention needs continue to grow in the media industry, Dirty Looks' investment in Archiware P5 sets them up for long-term success – and Archiware is proud to support them on that journey.

Dirty Looks: dirtylooks.co.uk
Escape Technology: escape-technology.com