



CASE STUDY

AUSTIN CITY LIMITS®

Photo courtesy of KLRU-TV, Austin PBS. Photo by Scott Newton

KLRU-TV, Austin PBS created Austin City Limits (ACL) 42 years ago and has produced it ever since. ACL is the longest-running music series in television history and remains the only TV series to ever be awarded the National Medal of Arts. ACL offers viewers unparalleled access to featured acts in an intimate setting that provides a platform for artists to deliver inspired, memorable, full-length performances. The program is taped live before a concert audience from The Moody Theater in downtown Austin and distributed to PBS stations across the country with select distribution worldwide including the UK, Australia and Brazil.

AUSTIN CITY LIMITS®



Amanda Moore and James Cole are leading the effort to digitize and preserve the archive of over 40 years of Austin City Limits (ACL) episodes produced by KLRU-TV, Austin PBS. The ACL catalog includes more than 550 hour-long episodes as well as thousands of hours of unaired footage from well-known and obscure musical artists and groups from the past 42 years.

The pilot for Austin City Limits was shot in 1974. Willie Nelson performed. The production was recorded in Studio 6A on the University of Texas campus, and the stark, no-frills environment became the ethos of the show. Just two SD cameras were used to shoot the entire show. Over time more cameras were added, with HD cameras being used beginning in 2007. The final copy of each episode, along with countless hours of unaired songs and alternate camera angles, were then stored away.

As the Austin City Limits archive grew, the videotapes used to store programming and related content were slowly deteriorating.



Bela Fleck and the Flecktones - Photo courtesy of KLRU-TV, Austin PBS. Photo by Scott Newton.

Recovering, cataloging, and preserving this treasure trove of thousands of hours of one-of-a-kind musical performances for future generations was the challenge facing Amanda, James and the rest of the KLRU staff. Determined not to lose their unique archive, KLRU created an internal project to digitize, restore, and preserve the entire Austin City Limits video library from 1974 onward. The challenge facing Amanda and James was to do all of this on the austere budget of a PBS station.



Foo Fighters cover the Fabulous Thunderbirds
Photo courtesy of KLRU-TV, Austin PBS. Photo by Scott Newton.

The Plan

The archive consisted of 4,000 hours of videotape, so the first step was to prioritize the content to be recovered. That was difficult, as who's to say if the 1992 Bela Fleck and the Flecktones performance should be restored before The Fabulous Thunderbirds 1984 episode. Complicating the prioritization process was the condition of the videotapes. Some were deteriorating more rapidly than others; you might have only one shot at digitizing the aging material.

As the material is digitized, the KLRU staff will store a version of their newly digitized files in the cloud. From the cloud, they reasoned, they could easily distribute a copy of the content to licensees and potentially replace their current hodgepodge of delivery systems. In addition, cloud storage will be an integral part of their goal to ensure the long-term security of their irreplaceable assets by serving as one of the archives for all their digital content.

KLRU compared different cloud storage providers and chose Backblaze B2. Backblaze provides the high performance, ready access cloud storage KLRU needed at an affordable price for both storage and distribution.

In addition, Backblaze B2 pricing is straight-forward. There are no pricing tiers or hidden fees, which makes forecasting costs much easier and more predictable.



Austin City Limits Celebrates 40 Years "Not Fade Away" - Photo courtesy of KLRU-TV, Austin PBS. Photo by Scott Newton.

The Project

The project started with an outside vendor digitizing the Austin City Limits videotapes. The newly-digitized episodes were ingested onto KLRU's internal servers, reviewed for quality, and scheduled for cleanup as necessary. The finished files were then tagged with the attributes KLRU deemed necessary to retrieve the information at a later date. Finally, the newly minted digital media files, episodes and related materials, were ready to be uploaded to B2, but there was a problem. KLRU found that the Internet connection available to them was not very fast or reliable. It was fine for office work, but high volume media uploads were another thing. Since any future connection upgrade was expensive and months to years away, KLRU needed another solution.



Backblaze provided KLRU with a Backblaze B2 Fireball, a data ingest device for securely migrating large amounts of data to the B2 cloud. KLRU was able to load 40 terabytes of digitized media from their local storage system to the Fireball and ship it to Backblaze. Once there, the data was securely downloaded to KLRU's B2 account. The entire process proved quicker and more reliable than using KLRU's current Internet connection.



Ben Harper - Photo courtesy of KLRU-TV, Austin PBS. Photo by Scott Newton.

Once the media files were loaded to B2, the KLRU staff connected their purpose built media access and distribution system to the data by using the B2 APIs. The system uses locally stored proxies for the initial presentation of the requested content and then accesses and downloads the high-resolution files stored on B2 as needed.

The Goal

The ultimate goal of Amanda, James, and the rest of the KLRU team, is to have the entire catalog of Austin City Limits episodes and related content preserved for future generations. Backblaze is helping by providing KLRU with the affordable cloud storage they will rely on to keep their unique cache of digital content secure and available for years to come.

Backblaze is honored to have the opportunity for B2 to store and preserve one-of-a-kind performances from Stevie Ray Vaughan, Johnny Cash, The Flaming Lips, Coldplay, and many others now being digitized, restored, and preserved by KLRU.



Coldplay & R.E.M - Photo courtesy of KLRU-TV, Austin PBS. Photo by Scott Newton.

About Backblaze B2 Cloud Storage

Backblaze B2 Cloud Storage is a cloud storage solution that provides data storage at one-fourth the cost of leading cloud storage providers: \$0.005 GB/month for storage, free uploads, and \$0.02 (\$/GB) for downloads. Things to know about B2:

- Upload and download data using a Web GUI, API, or CLI.
- Stored data is instantly available. There are no offline or near-line delays.
- There are no pricing tiers for data storage, it is simply \$0.005 per GB per month.
- Data durability is 99.999999% and availability is covered by an SLA.
- Robust documentation, including guides and examples in curl, Java, C#, Python Swift and Ruby.

www.backblaze.com/b2