

Maxtor Keeps Documentary Film Project Team on the Road with Storage to Spare

Client: The Young Americans Project

Challenge: Provide a rugged and reliable video and audio storage solution for a three-month road trip profiling the lives and chronicling the voices of intriguing American youths

Solution: Maxtor OneTouch™ external storage and backup solution



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— Matt Wiggins—
Team member,
The Young Americans Project

Twenty thousand miles of travel, 125 hours of video and audio footage, and thousands of photos – that’s the output from four young men who spent three months in late 2005 crisscrossing the country in an RV, searching out the voices of America’s most compelling young people. The Young Americans Project (www.tyap.com) goal is to produce a documentary and a book; the four road trippers have already posted many dispatches from the field at their Web site.

Keeping track of the hours of video footage and other digital material the project team compiled daily required a simple-to-use, large-capacity media storage solution that could stand up to the rigors of the road. Their choice? Maxtor OneTouch 300GB external storage drives with dual USB 2.0/FireWire 400 interfaces, which made it easy for the team to back up their valuable content and ship it home.

“The Maxtor OneTouch drives are our silent partners,” says Matt Wiggins, who is working on the documentary and book along with partners Matt Heineman, Ben Grinnell, and Adam White. “If we happen to be in a place where we find a lot of interesting people to talk to, we know that we can shoot for hours, and we don’t have to worry about running out of storage space.”

Seeing the country, with a purpose

Why did three young college grads (and one student) decide to embark on a cross-country RV trip talking to young people, instead of landing cushy high-paying jobs? Ben Grinnell says the idea came to him while driving back to school after a vacation break.

“I knew I wanted to see the country after I graduated – but I also wanted to do

something productive,” says Grinnell, who graduated from Dartmouth College.

“We wanted to see our country up close and personal, not looking down from an airplane,” says Heineman, also a Dartmouth grad. “At the same time, we realized we should get to know our generation better. So we decided to travel with a purpose.”

Hatching a plan to create a documentary and a book featuring candid interviews with teenagers and twentysomethings around the country, Heineman and Grinnell brought White, another Dartmouth classmate, into the project. Heineman then contacted Wiggins, a high school friend about to enter his senior year at Boston College, to make up the foursome.

In fall of 2005 – with Wiggins putting his senior year at Boston College on hold – the group set out in a borrowed RV to find out exactly what young people were saying and thinking about everything from politics to religion to careers.

“There’s so much noise in popular culture. We felt that these voices weren’t getting through,” Wiggins explains. “We wanted their voices to be unfiltered.”

Some of the voices that the team has captured include a young farming couple in Maine committed to growing organic food; a New Orleans relief worker, a co-creator of Mozilla Firefox web browsing software in Mountain View, California; a young teacher instructing high school students about the history of hip-hop in St. Louis, and the editor-in-chief of the country’s largest independent college newspaper, the Wisconsin Badger-Herald.

The Young Americans Project team captured about 140 interview subjects on camera for the documentary film, which Wiggins expects to complete by September 2006, and submit for competition at the Sundance Film Festival™. In addition, the team compiled written interviews with, and took photos of, 55 people for possible inclusion in a book about the project.



Easy media storage for on-the-road filmmaking

On the days when the team was on the road in the RV, they'd split up into different groups. For instance, White and Grinnell might interview people using a digital voice recorder, while Heineman and Wiggins would take one of their three digital video cameras and find some likely subjects for the documentary.

"Sometimes we'd have an interview set up, but most of the time we'd just go out and talk to people – it was unbelievable how receptive they were," Heineman says. The team would ask questions like, "What's the most pressing issue affecting the U.S. today?" or "What defines our generation?"

About Maxtor

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For purposes of measuring disk drive storage capacity, one gigabyte (GB) represents one billion bytes and one terabyte (TB) represents one trillion bytes. The Maxtor OneTouch serves as an element of an overall backup strategy.

Every couple of days, the team downloaded the video footage onto the Maxtor OneTouch storage solution using the Final Cut® software program. Audio files from the digital voice recorder and digital photos were also transferred to the Maxtor external storage solutions. The team benefited from Maxtor's fast interface, which is ideal for high-speed applications like video editing.

"It's unbelievably simple to do the downloading. We just drag items into a folder, and it's done," says Heineman. "The automatic filing software makes it easy for us to access and manage the footage, which is important when we have so much video and audio on hand." The team can also relax in the knowledge that the data is safe, thanks to Maxtor's automated "set it and forget it" backup software.

Wiggins was The Young Americans Project team member who first contacted Maxtor about donating the Maxtor OneTouch storage solutions to the project. "Maxtor really went to bat for us," Wiggins says. "They're just the right products for this type of digital filmmaking project. In fact, Maxtor is making it easier for all kinds of people to backup, store and access their own video projects."

Given the Maxtor OneTouch solutions' reliability on the road, Heineman says the team plans to recommend them to other videographers who may be planning similar storage-intensive projects. "They're very robust," he says. "They've traveled the entire country with four guys in a RV, and they've survived."

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