

## Cartoon Saloon draws a digital response to Covid calamity

**Instead of allowing the Covid-19 crisis to draw a blank page, Kilkenny animation studio [Cartoon Saloon](#) joined forces with Carlow's Blacknight and SIRO to power its remote workforce.**

A lucrative animation project for Kilkenny-based Oscar-nominated studio Cartoon Saloon was saved from the deadening impact of Covid by quick-thinking and imaginative use of broadband in the regions.

Cartoon Saloon was in the final stages of completing *Wolfwalkers*, one of the most eagerly anticipated animated features of the year, when Covid-19 broke out.

Working with its broadband partner [Blacknight](#), the studio was able to connect to [SIRO's](#) Gigabit 100pc fibre broadband network to ensure that a remote working solution could be put in place to enable them to put the finishing touches to their latest movie and other shows.

While hundreds of thousands are working remotely across Ireland, connectivity into the office has never been more important in terms of a company's ability to serve their remote workforce.

By connecting Cartoon Saloon's studio in Kilkenny to SIRO's Fibre-to-the-Building network this has doubled their bandwidth speed and increased the reliability and performance, enabling the company to provide access to large files and office applications remotely via a secure VPN solution as well as enabling employees, clients and partners access and share very large files across the globe.

### Animation powerhouse

Kilkenny-based Cartoon Saloon is a celebrated animation studio formed by Paul Young, Tomm Moore and Nora Twomey in 1999. In 2010, the studio's first feature film, *The Secret of Kells*, was nominated for an Academy Award; in 2015, follow-up feature *Song of the Sea* garnered a second nomination while *The Breadwinner* was nominated earlier this year.

The company's Emmy-nominated pre-school series, *Puffin Rock*, is streamed in 25 languages on Netflix and has been viewed nearly 100m times in China on Tencent Holdings' streaming platform. In 2017 it emerged that Cartoon Saloon would generate 140 new jobs as part of a collaboration called Lighthouse Studios with Canada's Mercury Filmworks.

The project hinges on the development of an all-new 2D and 3D-focused animation studio as part of the joint venture. Cartoon Saloon's hand-drawn cartoon *Wolfwalkers*, an adventure set in 17th century Ireland, will stream on Apple+ later this year. Cartoon Saloon's Louise Bagnall was nominated for an Oscar for her cartoon *Late Afternoon* in 2019. Bagnall is also one of the few Irish members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Hollywood.

Commenting on the partnership with Blacknight and SIRO, Mark Mullery, studio technical director, Cartoon Saloon, and assistant director of the new feature, *Wolfwalkers* said: "Gigabit broadband enabled new ways of working, giving us the capability to quickly share content with any corner of the globe, whether it's Hollywood or Beijing.

"Reliable and fast remote access has been crucial since the initial lockdown and Blacknight were able to provide us with a seamless solution with SIRO's gigabit broadband service. As a result, we have been able to put the finishing touches to our latest feature with minimal delay."

With nearly 100,000 customers across the globe, Blacknight is known as a market leader in the provision of hosting and co-location services ranging from small single web site hosting to complex backup, connectivity, co-location and security solutions.

"Remote workers have to be able to have the same digital experience no matter where they are working from and we have been able to provide Cartoon Saloon with the perfect solution thanks to SIRO's gigabit broadband network," said Michele Neylon, CEO and Co-founder, Blacknight.

"Being able to tailor services for our customers specific needs has always been what has made Blacknight stand out from the competition, with the speed and capability of our roll-out for Cartoon Saloon highlighting how we are helping businesses succeed despite Covid-19."

The SIRO network now covers 351,000 premises, with services now live or under construction in 21 counties across the country. SIRO is offered on an open-access basis to all telecoms retailers in Ireland. Using the existing ESB network, SIRO delivers fibre optic cables all the way to the building.

This technology, known as fibre-to-the-building, has no copper connections at any point to slow down the network and delivers 1Gbps speeds. For context, downloading a high definition movie that is 4 gigabytes in size with a standard 10 Mbps connection would usually take an hour. In contrast, it takes 30 seconds with SIRO's gigabit broadband.

"Since the outbreak of Covid-19, SIRO has been helping people and businesses across the country do life differently," said Ronan Whelan, SIRO's chief commercial officer.

"Our gigabit broadband network is on a par with what is available in Tokyo, which means that Cartoon Saloon's employees and clients across the world have been able to successfully

collaborate seamlessly using online services. The increased speed and reliability of their office internet link has been crucial to this success, as has employees improving the speed and reliability of their home internet by connecting to our gigabit broadband.”

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