



Use the right tools for the right application

Interview with Pierre Maillat and Jean-Louis Blanchard of Canal+

The production team at Canal+ was tasked with taking on more program production without increasing the number of studios. They found Grass Valley's AMPP (Agile Media Production Platform) to be the ideal solution for their new way of working.

As Pierre Maillat, Head of Technical Studies & Architecture at Canal+ explained: "As part of our organizational changes, we have Canal+ International coming to us to produce. So, we have more and more sports to broadcast with the same number of studios. The sports matches need graphics, branding and commentary for the countries or territories we serve. To provide a better experience for both our producers and our audience, we wanted to adapt the workflow and the tools we give to the end users depending on the sport or the type of production. This capability to adapt the workflow, the tools, the sophistication of each production was very key for us. The capability to be elastic was one of the reasons we chose AMPP®."

At Canal+ there are three types of production galleries. They are used interchangeably based on the complexity of the production. The main galleries use a traditional hardware configuration with a Kahuna® production switcher. The other two types, the multifeed and branding galleries, are now software-based galleries using an on-premises AMPP deployment. All the inputs and outputs for AMPP are SMPTE ST 2110. The system fits well inside a traditional 2110 production center as one of many IP sources that are routed through traditional paths prior to broadcast.

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Pierre Maillat, Head of Technical Studies & Architecture, Canal+



More production from the same team

“AMPP gives us the ability to increase the number of matches we can cover,” said Jean-Louis Blanchard, integration and support engineer. “In our multifeed gallery we can have up to eight productions running at the same time. In this gallery there are standard looks we have developed that simplify production with the help of AMPP. We can add a clip at halftime. We can have a French speaker in a commentary booth near our gallery. We can add a logo, or clock and score. This is exactly what we need for content like paddle or golf or the second division rugby Pro D2.

“We also have three galleries that we call branding galleries,” Blanchard continued. “These have more ability to produce content. They can switch between four external feeds, not just main and backup. They have a replay server. They can key in a picture-in-picture. They also have a lot of graphics. With this production gallery, the producer and director can make the same thing as in a legacy gallery, but they use AMPP.

“Our broadcast controller can switch shows between galleries, so in a few months when the international programming comes to our facilities, we will use the multifeed and branding galleries together. The same team can produce, direct and edit four multifeed plus one branding gallery show – five events at the same time with the help of AMPP.”

Simplifying the user experience

Working on multiple shows at the same time requires new toolsets and workflows. Blanchard explained: “In our gallery we have a lot of Kaleido-IP™ screens showing all the feeds as well as the AMPP dashboard and UI. With a quick look we can see the status of each show. The team can have a global view of all of that. In addition, we can monitor and switch between each of the shows on the same screen.

“This way of working is simpler for our operators. Previously the team had to manage multiple programs with a standard router, and they could not add clips or a logo. Their options were very constrained. Now with AMPP, we give them StreamDeck panels and a touchscreen surface. With the StreamDeck they can easily switch between each show and AMPP’s Live Producer X application allows them to select templated actions for each take on the touchscreen.



“Because the system is very agile, we’ve also been able to standardize the look of the shows. Each gallery is responsible for certain processes. For example, the producer who cuts on the main external feed hands off the first halftime to a multifeed station where they add a replay clip and then give it back on the first event.”

Maillat explained further: “The operators have changed from a concept of monitoring by exception to command by exception. They can focus on the monitors in front of them. They have the commands they need when they need them. When they want to do something on the multifeed it’s very simple. With the macros inside AMPP, and the widgets on the AMPP dashboard all tied to a StreamDeck console, we can provide only what the end user needs. They are not lost in the full environment of many tools or a big panel with functions they don’t need. So, the multiplication of the feeds and programs is not an issue. It’s easy for them to manage a lot of tasks like that. We are improving the quality of the programs, while simplifying the user experience for the operator.”

Integrating a hybrid system

In addition to improving the quality of the production and the work environment, AMPP still had to integrate smoothly with the existing infrastructure. Canal+ operates a SMPTE ST 2110 environment orchestrated by a third-party controller that doesn’t yet interface with AMPP. It treats AMPP as an edge device sending and receiving signals like any other device on the network.

While AMPP has multiviewer capability, Canal+ chose to use Grass Valley’s Kaleido-IP monitoring instead. Because the monitor walls in the galleries also show sources that are not running through AMPP, using Kaleido-IP was a familiar way to show all signals without routing them through AMPP. For some views, the AMPP multiviewers are routed to Kaleido-IP.

This decision to use familiar tools also influenced the decision to pair AMPP Live Producer X with a Vizrt graphics engine using an NDI workflow and an EVS XT server for replay in the branding galleries.

Options for the future

“AMPP is still in its early stages,” summarized Maillat. “One of the things we like about AMPP is its ability to adapt. When we first started this project, we asked for some adjustments. The development team expanded AMPP to provide those adjustments, giving us new functionality that is very helpful. Just imagine what could be the next step... We are ready to give people tools for any workflow, even the ones we haven’t thought of yet.”

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