

Case Study

Datapath on song at Eurovision

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With Datapath technology deployed many times previously at the Eurovision Song Contest, the 2013 event in Malmö, Sweden proved no exception.

Having been asked by SVT (Swedish Television) to do the graphic content and provide the media server hardware, Beacon by SSR Stagelight AB opted to use the Datapath's VisionSDI2 capture cards and x4 display controller in the set up, with stunning results.



Every year an estimated television audience of around 125 million watch the Eurovision Song Contest. With the eyes of the world looking on, there was clearly no margin for error in Malmö. Here, Datapath SDI capture cards were used for sending out incoming signals on live cameras and Datapath x4 display controllers for exploiting extra outputs to Barco projectors, all in full HD.

Since the 8 x 32m back wall for the projections was in a 3D format, with no straight angles anywhere (and a short distance for the projectors), making the set-up work perfectly was to prove a big challenge. Furthermore, the units for floor and aerial projections had to be tweaked and key-stoned precisely since the space in the rigging was small and not always in the perfect position.

The right blend

Brownsblend AB manages the hire for Beacon by SSR Stagelight, while the latter is also the exclusive distributor for Green Hippo's Hippotizer media servers in Sweden. The company has extensive experience of pairing Green Hippo media servers with Datapath technology.

"In this environment we have to rely on the hardware as much as possible," says Morgan Brown, CEO of Brownsblend. "Of course, it's all computers these days but finding the right working relationship between hardware is crucial for us. The stable function of Datapath capture cards in the Hippotizer servers makes this combination our first choice as we know it will be problem-free. The Datapath x4 is also a great unit that we use all the time to get extra outputs wherever required."

"RGB's Hippotizer rental racks will always contain Datapath capture cards where needed, along with a Datapath x4 to solve any output requirements," says Johan West of Red Green Blue RGB Oy, Finland, who handled the media servers for Eurovision 2013 along with Morgan Brown.

Hop to it

Beacon by SSR Stagelight devised a Green Hippo Grasshopper set-up in Überpan mode, comprising four active Hippotizer v3HD Genlock units and four active back-ups. In addition there was a single active Aeries Überpan Master and one active back-up. Approximately 6000 content files totalled around 480 Gb of data. All of the content and graphics were rendered out in 5400 x 1080 pixels in QuickTime format and PNG series.



The Hippotizer units fed content through a Barco Encore system to 13 Barco HDQ 2K40 projectors that were mounted on their side to fit the back wall 3D projection surface. There were also seven active back-up projectors. These only covered the middle part of the canvas but the set-up was built so that the projector or server combinations could be deployed however required.

In addition, there were a further two Hippotizer v3HD units with a pair of active back-ups, along with four Green Hippo GrassHoppers with four active back-ups, plus two Datapath x4 display controllers. These were feeding the show's projectors, which in turn were casting images on the floor, on the ramp in one of the opening acts, on a tree in one of the interval acts, on a dress in one of the numbers, and also in the air.

Seamless operation

"Being the technical director for this event, and other events in this size, every day that I don't hear about technical malfunctions, is a good day," says SVT's Ola Melzig. "Time is never on our side, and even if you have great back-ups, you really don't want to use them if possible – you just want it all to work seamlessly. The entire look and feel of Eurovision 2013 in Malmö was based on a very delicate part of the technical set-up, so to encounter zero problems makes me extremely satisfied."



Barco, Hippotizer and Datapath products work together in an optimised and reliable way that helps minimise technical issues. In total, Eurovision 2013 featured 12 Hippotizer v3HD Genlock units fitted with Datapath SDI dual channel capture cards to control 28 Barco HDQ 2K40, two Barco FLM HD22, four Barco FLM HD20 and two Barco XLM HD30 projectors. There were also eight Green Hippo GrassHoppers, two Aeries Überpan Masters and six Datapath x4 units in action.