



NTV-PLUS Using Grass Valley integrated production infrastructure for high-pressure, mission-critical performance at the London Summer Games



CUSTOMER

NTV-Plus, Russia
Russian digital satellite pay TV service operator
Russian broadcast rights holder for the London Summer Games

CHALLENGE

Provide comprehensive coverage from London with a fast, flexible, completely reliable system, capable of being repurposed after the event for maximum ROI

SOLUTION

Complete integrated production infrastructure based on the GV STRATUS Media Workflow Application Framework to control content workflows around server networks and editing facilities

BENEFIT

Following the Games, the London-based GV STRATUS system was installed in Moscow to enhance NTV-Plus's production capabilities
Fully integrated with existing K2 media servers and Grass Valley EDIUS and EDIUS Express stations

“We looked at a number of solutions, and the Grass Valley STRATUS service oriented architecture stood out as the best option to provide the workflow we needed, both in London and at home.”

Oleg Kolesnikov, CTO, NTV-Plus

Background

Leading Russian satellite broadcaster NTV-Plus was planning comprehensive coverage of a number of major sporting events from London in 2012. It had been the Russian broadcast rights holder for the Beijing Summer Games in 2008 and had faced several operational challenges. Named the Russian broadcast rights holder for the London Summer Games, it analyzed the difficulties of 2008, then made a list of requirements for the complex it was going to need in London.

Efficiency, multiple access to the same material, and reliability were among the main criteria considered. Compactness was also considered since NTV-Plus would have to transport all equipment from Moscow to London and back again. Additionally, the system had to fully integrate with its existing EDIUS nonlinear editing workstations from Grass Valley, a Belden Brand, and its Ardeno MAM.

Knowing NTV-Plus would require a system that would be fast, flexible, completely reliable, and capable of being repurposed after the summer for maximum ROI, Oleg Kolesnikov, CTO for NTV-Plus, along with his colleagues, evaluated all possibilities offered, at price points that made the most business sense.

Solution

After reviewing the broad range of international and domestic options, and analyzing the pros and cons, Kolesnikov and his team selected the Grass Valley solution, based on the GV STRATUS Media Workflow Application Framework.

The final decisions on the system were made in February/March of 2012, so they had very little time before the July start of the Games to develop, order, and launch the project in Moscow, to fine-tune everything, to train personnel, to correct any issues, to pack the equipment and send it to London, and then to launch the event complex to work during the Games.

NTV-Plus decided to utilize a system integrator, Professional Television Systems (PTS), that guaranteed that they would meet all deadlines. The equipment supplier was Okno-TV.

One of conditions for the collaboration with Grass Valley and PTS was the deployment of the entire complex in Moscow in the Ostankino Television Center. Its fine-tuning including load stress testing, engineering and creative personnel training, and troubleshooting.

In May, NTV-Plus began to receive the system and started to fine-tune it in stages as shipments arrived.

During this time, GV STRATUS was upgraded version to 2.0. NTV-Plus engineers from its technical management department, together with Grass Valley experts, conducted training sessions for the creative personnel.

“In our experience, such testing is extremely important as we had several problems which were solved by the companies’ staff,” said Kolesnikov.

On June 20, fine tuning of the system was complete (which took an incredibly short two weeks) and the creatives had managed to upload most of the required media, so the system was sent to London.

The main task of the system was to record up 16 HD channels simultaneously on a new K2 SAN — to guarantee access within the first few seconds of recording to all journalists who would edit programs and news stories or otherwise prepare broadcasts. Integrated into the system was a channel to receive stock materials from the NTV-Plus Ardeno MAM system in Moscow.

For maximum productivity, the system supported 13 GV STRATUS workstations for viewing and simple editing by the large number of editorial staff, along with five Grass Valley EDIUS NLEs attached to the SAN. These same GV STRATUS workstations were also used for playback control, as there was no automated system. The tightly integrated solution, using all Grass Valley components and workflows, was cost-effective without the usual integration risks because there were no interface points of failure.

In London, the NTV-Plus team was based within the International Broadcasting Center (IBC), in a studio in Wimbledon (as the Russian rights holder for the tennis tournament), and in the main presentation studio in Westminster. These three locations were interconnected with NTV-Plus in Moscow. Staff in Westminster could see the material from the IBC, and the Moscow material could be easily uploaded to the London system when necessary. The on-site system and interconnection were launched, set up, and tuned within two weeks, starting July 15, with the Games opening on July 27.

On-air July 26, the GV STRATUS system was operational 24/7, serving as a base for six channels and 12 ports. During the Games, NTV-Plus never experienced any serious problems that lead to broadcast disruption. Materials from Panasonic P2 cards were uploaded to the common system array, and baseband video from the Olympic Broadcasting Service’s EVS system (based at the IBC) was recorded into the GV STRATUS system.

NTV-Plus’s operation at London’s IBC was in essence a miniature version of their Ostankino facility. At the center of its 200 square meters, the Grass Valley solution served as the hub of all NTV-Plus broadcasting during the Games in London.

Benefits

Following the Games, the GV STRATUS system used at the IBC was installed in Ostankino to enhance NTV-Plus's production capacities. The system is integrated with existing K2 media servers, Grass Valley EDIUS stations (for complex editing), and EDIUS Express stations (for simple news editing).

The GV STRATUS system serves as the heart of an integrated production, post, and distribution system, as NTV-Plus continues to update its operations.

Already preparing for the Sochi 2014 Winter Games in Russia, NTV-Plus has taken what was learned from their positive experiences in London producing from several locations and plans on continuing in the same direction.

"It is quite possible that we will be building a new broadcasting complex with the main production and storage systems located in Moscow, while the editing workstations will be located in Sochi. High-speed interconnection will make it possible for us to work in Sochi as if we were in Moscow," said Kolesnikov.

"By leveraging our current EDIUS NLEs with a new K2 SAN for recording and playout, all under GV STRATUS, we knew that we could achieve the right performance and resilience within a tight timescale for this high-pressure, mission-critical system."

Oleg Kolesnikov, CTO, NTV-Plus



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