SINGUL▲R.LIVE

Overlaying future revenue

InterComms talks to Andrew Heimbold, CEO at Singular, about the future of overlay technology

Q: Could we first introduce our readers to Singular.live and a bit of history of the company and how you came about forming?

A: Singular was built by a team who are industry experts in live graphics. Our founders include Hubert Oehm who wrote the original Vizrt graphics engine and RCS who have won a dozen Emmys for their graphics and technical work on high end live productions, including multiple Superbowls, MLB, F1, ESPN, UFC and eSports events like Blizzard Overwatch League and Riot League of Legends. As a group we saw that not only was media being consumed in a different way but it was being produced in a different way and by different people. Video production and distribution was evolving to embrace digital technologies but graphics were not. That is fundamentally why we saw a need for a platform like Singular.

Q: Overlay technology has been around for a long time in broadcast and has been a way of passing instant information to viewers, how does Singular.live differ from previous and existing product offerings?

A: Singular builds on the best of that, not least because the team behind Singular have been at the forefront of the industry for almost quarter of a century. However it also brings in huge benefits that can only be derived from a digital platform. For instance Singular is entirely cloud based

meaning there is no dedicated hardware, no downloads, no licences or dongles and you can scale it as much as you need, when you need. Designers and operators can work on any computer with an internet connection and a web browser. No Capex costs and no contracts. You simply use Singular when required and pay for what you use. By harnessing the power of digital technology though we can do much more. We still provide a traditional workflow for anyone who wants it with graphics burned into the video signal (what we call On Stream) however we can also do On Device rendering of overlays. This uses client-side rendering so that instead of burning the overlays onto the video they are actually rendered by the viewer's device. This allows us to do things like interactivity as well as localisation and even down to personalisation. So that can be things like polls or clicking for more data but it can also allow viewers to select what language they want their overlays in for example. The interactivity is incredibly powerful when you also consider that it can be used for purchases or betting and more. The final part of our On Stream and On Device is On Demand. This feature enables anyone to keep their overlays 'live'. So on VOD or archive content, if they have been created with Singular On Demand, they remain live and can even be changed at any point. If you update your house style for example, all the published content can have the new look applied just by updating the relevant composition. This offers a great tool for commercial teams since they can sell sponsorship that includes all the archive material which they can add a new client's logo to. Editorial teams love it because it allows you to correct mistakes at any stage and also update information at a later stage.

Q: One area that is of interest to all suppliers of TV, video streams, content providers, is how to look at new revenue channels, overlay technology is a prime product for use in monetizing content; what are the best ways to use your products to do this?

A: I have touched on this above but to summarise, Singular helps content creators make their content more engaging. However all of the additional benefits of interactivity, personalisation and the ability to re-sell your archive and VOD material present clear opportunities for revenue generation. The other big benefit of course is that the technology offers publishers in particular a way to generate revenue on their own platforms. Of course YouTube, Twitch and Facebook are great platforms for reaching a huge potential audience, but that comes at a cost. Not only do you lose some of your ad revenue but you also lose control of the content to a degree. If you can keep it on your own platform and build your audience there not only do you retain all the ad revenue but you also retain control of the content and build the audience for your platform.

Q: You are working with many companies, could we talk about how companies like Grabyo and Sky are using the product in real life?

A: Grabyo are a fantastic partner who have integrated Singular into their cloud based video editing and production platform. We have several mutual clients who benefit by leveraging the strengths of both platforms. We run free workshops for anyone wanting to learn how to use Singular but what we're finding is that actually any in-house design teams who have any experience with softwares like AfterEffects or Adobe Creative Suite pick it up really quickly. Sky are at an early stage of testing with us and we did a recent live stream with them for an event in Germany. This was done using our integration with Qvest Cloud which is a really powerful platform and a great partner. Singular is already integrated with a huge number of partners like Qvest and Grabyo on both the cloud production side but also desktop and hardware based systems too like vMix, Teradek, TVU and LiveU. The project we did last year for

Fox Sports was a really good example of how Singular can enhance a production. Called "Featured Tees" we took the main Fox Sports production feed for one camera on a single tee. We ran that into our partner Grabyo's web based live producer software and added an automated Singular overlay. This was wrap around overlay that displayed a really deep data dive showing things like club head speed, ball velocity and spin rate. Data that Fox Sports had but would never typically show on the main broadcast. This single channel gave fans of deeper data analysis an opportunity to view this on their OTT platform. There was no additional hardware required and everything was done through the cloud using a feed from an existing camera that was already on site but previously used infrequently.

Q: Where can our readers see the products in use and meet and chat to the company?

A: We are providing all the graphic overlays for the FA Women's Super League for this season with partners Grabyo. The PGA are now using Singular on all their press conferences. Alternatively you can view our latest work either on our website or our YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/singularlive. We are regulars at trade shows like NAB and IBC and have a growing presence at many more shows with our partners like Grabyo, TVU and Teradek among others. To contact us directly readers can email either of my colleagues: **mike@singular.live** in the UK or **jeff@singular.live** in the US. We're on all the usual social channels as well.

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