Al Mashhad Performs With Lawo IP Infrastructure Solutions



Picture: Al Mashhad

Dubai-based Al Mashhad, a multi-platform TV channel and digital platform launched in January 2023 and headed by GM Tony Khalife, a renowned journalist and news presenter in the Arab World, takes a modern and youth-focused approach in a unique digital and technologically advanced style. To reach its target audience, the station provides an innovative experience by mixing television and digital broadcasting in a seamless integration, based on cutting-edge technologies. The broadcaster implemented a digital-first, end-to-end strategy which allows to deploy adaptive, customized content based on analytics through a personalized AI-powered user experience.

The infrastructure for this bold concept is based on Lawo IP-native solutions integrating mc²36 All-in One audio consoles with A__UHD core audio technology combined with HOME, Lawo's management platform for IP-based media infrastructures, and Lawo VSM (Virtual Studio Manager) as overall broadcast control solution. A__line stageboxes are used as AoIP nodes. Early last year, following some meticulous planning, the Al Mashhad team awarded the broadcast integration project to systems integrator One Diversified, also a Dubai Studio City tenant.

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Al Mashhad’s Head of Technology, Srinivas Kuppa, and his Engineering Division were very pleased that Lawo was going to be a part of their technological solution. The hybrid IP solution designed by Kuppa serves the vision of Al Masshad’s digital ambitions and is unparalleled in the region. “Flawless coordination is key for Al Mashhads IP infrastructure, and we decided to reach out to a company with a track record for this kind of projects. With Lawo, we found a partner that not just develops and manufactures innovative quality equipment, but also provides services around the installation”, explains Kuppa. “Technically, Lawo’s HOME allows for intuitive IP stream routing, while overall control is handled by the device-agnostic Lawo VSM. This allows to seamlessly integrate the Audio-over-IP RAVENNA network with the broadcast equipment of Al Mashhad’s facilities.” HOME was chosen as it is cloud-native and designed to connect, manage and secure all aspects and instances of live production environments. It provides the tools and centralized services for swift and effective interaction of engineers with their devices. HOME turns an array of devices, setups, sites, hubs and data centers into a powerful, agile and secure network.

Integrated in the whole infrastructure are two 32-fader Lawo mc²36 MkII consoles, each accommodating 256 processing channels at 48/96kHz and an I/O capacity of 864 channels. IP-native, with support for all relevant standards, each desk also features redundant power supplies and ST2022-7 ‘hitless merge’ network redundancy demanded by live broadcast operations. The redundancy design integrates two VisTool interfaces with access to ruby consoles as backups, powered by a Power Core as processing engine. Furthermore, the setup includes six A__mic8 devices that serve as stageboxes for the IP infrastructure.

It was a daring undertaking in scope but also in time: “The project started in late 2021,” explains Kuppa, “and the challenge was to turn around the project in terms of planning, designing, building constructing, deploying technology, testing and commissioning. This included addressing screen architecture and studio designs in just seven months. Testing, training, and rehearsals were conducted in December, and the channel successfully went on air in January.” With such a big operation deployed at such a fast pace, training was key. “Owing to the speed of the project, we started training resources early in the project with full support from key suppliers. Lawo held a key position, and One Diversified, especially the extensive efforts of Suhail Ahmed, CEO OneDiversified Fz LLC, provided invaluable assistance” tells Kuppa.

Suhail’s comment on the project: “As we evolve towards a wider adoption of story-centric workflows, we will continue to see our customers push the boundaries of what technology can offer today and tomorrow. Working with Al Mashhad has really inspired our team, and witnessing Al Mashhad’s going live on January 11th, 2023, was a proud moment for everyone involved.”

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