Lawo for SKY Sport Germany



L-R: Chris Hermann, Florian Hennig

SKY Sport Deutschland, a provider of sports broadcasts in Germany, has launched a comprehensive technical overhaul, with Lawo equipment sitting at the heart of this transformation. The SKY project team – Christian Barth (Director Production Platforms, Origination & Distribution), Florian Hennig (Head of Production Architecture) and Chris Hermann (Senior Manager Production Architecture) – is responsible for the selection and implementation of the new infrastructure. Wolfgang Götz from promediatools provided consulting services on behalf of Lawo.

SKY Sport is installing a total of twelve IP-native Lawo diamond broadcast mixing consoles to optimize its sports coverage and television workflows. Based on the open AES67/RAVENNA Audio-over-IP network standards, the diamond consoles are inherently also ST2110-30/-31 and ST2022-7 compliant. The setup furthermore comprises Lawo Power Core units as DSP engines and to provide the diamond consoles with expandable I/O connectivity for AES67, MADI, analog, AES3 and Dante sources and destinations. For broadcast control, SKY uses the acclaimed VSM system (Virtual Studio Manager), a comprehensive control and workflow solution for IP-based broadcast infrastructures which provides seamless integration and support for custom workflows.

The selection process hinged on a proof-of-concept session to which several manufacturers had been invited. The SKY team eventually settled on the diamond broadcast console for radio and TV applications launched in late 2021, together with the VisTool graphical software interface and VSM. The reason for this decision was

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in part based on Sky’s desire to implement more efficient workflows as well as on the fact that a newly installed backbone infrastructure allows to leverage the full potential of VSM.



Christian Barth explains the initial situation: “The infrastructure needs to provide the highest possible degree of technological integration. Scalability also played an important role, as the envisaged mixing consoles needed to cover anything

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between mono voice-over assignments and Dolby Atmos productions while being easy to operate. The diamond makes it easy to map SKY's custom workflows." – "The Lawo mixing console is a good fit for our technological landscape," confirms Florian Hennig. "SKY has developed a tightly integrated audio-processing stack. It therefore makes sense, for example, for the sound engineer to hear the effect of how their mixes hit subsequent audio processing stages in the monitoring chain, and to tweak the settings accordingly on the mixing console. With its versatile DSP offering, the diamond eliminates erstwhile audio workflow limitations. Also, in light of the migration towards more and more remote production scenarios, different timing planes with sometimes significant offsets need to be aligned – and the diamond does this very well."

The new infrastructure, which was designed by Chris Hermann's team in collaboration with Wolfgang Götz, aims to merge several positions: "In addition to functionality, efficiency was another major consideration. Whereas previously only one type of sport could be broadcast per console, the diamond accommodates up to four sporting events per console," confirms Florian Hennig. In addition to the classic control rooms, a monitoring control room will be set up. Equipped with a Power Core as monitoring and conversion unit, it will be used to level and monitor all other control rooms, as Chris Hermann describes: "This means that a lot of information can be viewed or retrieved centrally as a 'single point of truth'; in addition, the intercom system will be operated from here".

After deciding on the system, defining the workflows, completing the technical implementation, and extensive training sessions in late 2023, installation and commissioning are scheduled for 2024. Until the technical transformation is complete, the new setup will run in parallel with the existing infrastructure. Reviewing how the project went so far, Christian Barth reports: "Preparations for the installation took around a year, during which all workflows were scrutinized and the complete infrastructure and functionality as well as VSM control were set up from scratch. During this time, our team got to know the system so well that it is now able to manage the entire setup on its own." Wolfgang Götz adds: "SKY Sport wanted to have the expertise in-house, which is why Lawo placed great emphasis on training and support during the project's implementation." Christian Barth concludes: "Our diamond/Power Core solution now perfectly reflects and serves our requirements."

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