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Exhibitor Viewpoints

AmberFin — Scott Allen

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Q. What broad technology trends do you think will be front-and-centre at IBC2008?

The boom in consumer demand for high-quality content on multiple platforms means that content owners now need to be prepared to repurpose content for devices ranging from Internet to VoD, TV and small screen devices. The biggest technology trends will be those that enable content owners to capitalise on the potential of both new and archived content, making existing programmes available to the consumer in the format they want to receive it, and generating new revenue opportunities for the content owners themselves. Inevitably, meeting the demand for content on new platforms raises incompatibility challenges: how to transfer footage from one platform to another, and how a traditional broadcast business can make the leap to a digital workflow.

This move will be one of the biggest drivers for the film and broadcast industry over the next year. Tape is a corrodible asset and broadcasters are learning the importance of transferring their archived content into digital formats to maintain its integrity, reduce the costs of physical storage, and enable it to be distributed to new delivery platforms.

Broadcasters and content owners ultimately want to do a good job, to provide the latest news and the best programming to people wherever they are. It is a natural thing for the industry to embrace new distribution paths and chase the audience. At the same time, broadcasters are aware of the challenges new platforms can bring — no one wants to see video go the way of music and be "Napster-ed", so there is an imperative need to get into new markets such as Web and mobile before other people start channelling content there. In addition, there are millions of media assets archived today that could be repurposed for online, on-demand or mobile channels to generate new revenue streams through subscription, pay-per-view and advertising-based downloads.

The broadcast industry should be encouraged to work with their existing assets to make the most of these new platforms and the opportunities they bring. New technologies will need to support this development; for example, our AmberFin iCR software is an open-standards, future-proof platform that maximizes the value of film and video content, from capture through to distribution. What we also know is that broadcasters can't just remove their old systems and start from scratch. The workflow must continue to function and we expect to see broadcasters beginning to integrate new technologies within their existing, successful processes to create a new and more efficient workflow.

Q. What's new that you will show at IBC2008 and that broadcasters should look for there?

AmberFin will be showcasing the latest version of its iCR software, an open-standards, future-proof platform that digitizes and transforms new and archived content, delivering the best quality pictures at smaller file sizes across multiple delivery platforms.

The move to file-based assets is a great opportunity for the film and broadcast industry — but one that also presents formidable challenges. The need to create workflows that can support output to an ever-increasing range of formats and standards is increasing; so is the need to take advantage of automated systems to cost-effectively manage encoding and repurposing of new and archived content. AmberFin iCR ensures you can overcome these challenges with the following standalone applications:



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- Mastering which offers the highest-possible ingest and encode quality with integrated quality control (QC) and annotation tools.
- Production encoding that focuses on the specific needs of tapeless operations for television production.
- Virtual VTR for machine room and assistant operator use.
- Review and QC to allow you to perform detailed, automated quality-control tasks, saving money and time compared to traditional QC processes.
- Repurposing that effortlessly publishes content to new multiplatform channels such as IPTV, VoD, and portable devices.

There also are a number of interoperability and compatibility challenges faced today by the film and broadcast industry. AmberFin iCR will be showcasing enhanced compatibility features, to support changing customer needs, including the Sony XDCAM and Panasonic P2 as well as Final Cut Pro and Avid.

Q. How is your new product offering different from what's available on the market?

AmberFin's unique end-to-end software platform, iCR, incorporates parent company Snell & Wilcox's Emmy award-winning technology. It is the only open-standard platform that digitises new and archived content, from capture through to distribution, while delivering the best quality pictures at smaller file sizes at the same time.

AmberFin iCR has a number of key proof points:

- It has digitized over 600,000 media assets for AmberFin's customers, allowing them to move into new emerging business markets with their content.
- It has the best HDTV in the market globally, ensuring new HD revenue opportunities are exploited to their full potential.
- It can reduce distribution costs by up to 85 percent when compared to traditional videotape delivery methods.
- It generates the best quality master, to ensure the best quality output for any delivery platform.
- It can increase operational efficiency (human resources and time) by up to 400 percent.

With hundreds of systems in the field, iCR is deployed by major content owners such as Sony, NBA, Turner, Channel 4 and Warner Brothers to manage the digitisation and repurposing of their content. Its five core applications are designed to address the industry's pain points at every stage of the digitisation process.

Q. Where are you based, and how many employees do you have? Anything else we should know about your company?

AmberFin is a new company, created as part of the Snell & Wilcox Group, which is a dedicated home for its iCR software. It currently has 50 employees. The HQ is in Basingstoke, UK, with a number of additional offices based globally.

Q. How many years have you been going to the IBC show and what's your fondest memory? What's your favourite restaurant or pub?

I have been going to IBC for around five years on and off and always love to see what technological advancements are being showcased by companies both big and small. One of my favourite restaurants is Beddington's; excellent food, modern décor and always a fantastic atmosphere.