

Audio Visual Experts Bring Network-Style Airings within Reach

by SIMON MATHER CBN Feature Writer

How would you like to channel the stylings of network-quality live TV production, together with real-time internet streaming capability, while being able to fit the entire studio into a backpack?

Now that enticing prospect is within reach, thanks to a Bend-based company bringing a new wave of technology to the region.

Audio Visual Presentations, Inc., headquartered in second-story space overlooking downtown Bend's bustling Wall Street hub, has long been known as an expert local provider for all manner of hi-tech videoconferencing, presentation, media and sound-related needs.

Often planning, installing and servicing all the equipment needed for auditorium and educational settings, the firm prides itself on keeping pace with leading edge developments - and is standing true to its word as the conduit for a new dimension of event exposure.

AVP has been chosen as exclusive Oregon partner for innovative portable live TV production equipment manufactured by desktop video pioneers NewTek. Known as the TriCaster series, the product is a virtual television studio packed into a customized PC and weighing just over 10 pounds.

Previously, the process of creating live, network-style television has been notorious as being costly and requiring significant amounts of expensive equipment, multiple connections and a large crew of people.

But TriCaster's lightweight, integrated and relatively competitively-priced portable system offers all of the tools - in-



Tony Sprando, President of Audio Visual Presentations, Inc., with new TriCaster portable live production equipment - a "Broadcast Truck in a Box."

cluding the ability to switch between multiple cameras, live virtual sets, titling, multi-channel effects and audio/video mixing control room functions - required to produce, broadcast, project and web stream a show.

AV President Tony Sprando said: "It really is the equivalent of a professional live TV broadcast truck in a box."

"There is a reason that it is the standard in portable live production for major players like Fox Sports, MTV, VH1, and the NHL.

"Its small footprint makes it possible to broadcast from anywhere and it is flexible enough to allow you to deliver live productions on your own or with a team."

Multiple video cameras can be plugged into the front of the box, with simultaneous output to video, projector and live streaming to the Internet, all the while also providing a DVD-quality recording of an event.

Sprando said: "One recent example of where this system performed tremendously was the broadcast of the 'monster concert' multi-piano festival held recently at Bend's downtown theatre.

"The fact that we could also stream this event live over the Internet, with viewers able to click a link to see the show, was really appreciated, for example, by relatives of musicians who couldn't attend the show in person."

He added: "One reason we got involved with this product came out of research on how we could serve our customers better and finding out what cutting-edge tech-

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nologies people were using in other areas that were being enthusiastically received.

"This system certainly fit into that category as receiving rave reviews from users such as local governments in the realm of broadcasting and recording events and meetings.

"When we approached NewTek we had to be approved as having the appropriate technical background and as being able to offer significant support and promotion, and we were selected as an 'Elite Partner' for Oregon, giving us exclusivity in distribution.

"Now we can offer this new tool in terms of sales or in the rental area of our business, and we can provide the back-up and technical assistance that often is absent when people transact online."

Sprando said one apt application of the easy-to-use portable TV production studio was for schools to produce a daily "news" segment of school announcements screened via classroom projectors, though since it allows si-

multaneous broadcast and web cast, a school could also stream plays, classes and athletic events - possibly also offering up other potential revenue streams. It also has the ability to create and edit projects for reoccurring video use (such as video yearbook projects and teacher lessons).

Portland Community College is already using the technology to stream lectures in what is known as the "Blackboard" format, accompanied by Power Point notes on screen - which is also proving a boon to students unable to attend classes in person at the time.

Sprando has also been active in teaching technology in local high schools and sees the accessible system as a useful instructional tool in sparking the interest of students in the hot career growth area of video production, and its myriad applications - especially as television and the Internet are the literacy of this generation.

The system offers a host of state-of-the-art graphics, audio, editing and effect options, including 'virtual set' technology which offers the look of a sophisticated studio setting in a tight space without the need for external equipment.

With lights, a simple camera setup and a green or blue backdrop, the on-camera

talent can be placed in any number of expansive customized virtual sets, while there is scope for multiple camera angles and the ability to change focal length from telephoto to medium to wide, without ever moving the camera.

The availability of professional features such as network-style transitions - including 'cross-fades,' 'wipes,' 'pushes,' 'peels' and '3D page curls' - as well as the ability to incorporate graphics, titles and animated overlays also boosts the impact of a live production, while minimizing any post-production edit needs.

The professional look of live sporting events can also be enhanced with graphics packs including designs for stats, scoreboards and borders that can be edited on the fly.

Sprando sees particular appeal for the TriCaster in the public, educational and worship sectors, adding: "For example, members of a congregation who cannot physically attend, could virtually join a sermon in real time via the webcast facility, or be able to sample differing places of worship.

"We are excited to explore other opportunities where this state-of-the-art video production technology can be useful. It really brings everything you'll need for a

professional, top-caliber broadcast or presentation and it has to be seen in action to be fully appreciated."

Sprando said he has offered free demos of the system to qualified interested parties at the company's base to illustrate its scope, and revealed that the product - which has a base model starting price of \$3,995 - is expected to be further available in High Definition (HD) within the next thirty days.

Potential opportunities to maximize the marketing benefits offered by webcasting is seen as another exciting future trend for businesses, in not having to limit a potential audience to the people in the room.

Sprando said that today's corporations are quietly discovering the competitive advantage that Internet streaming provides, with key accounts, hot new leads, vendors and many others able to join in on important meetings or events.

Further, live streaming can be more beneficial than on-demand, as viewers report stronger positive impressions when watching a live event.

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