

Case Study

Multiformat Kahuna™ Production Switcher Allows 3sixtymedia to Control Transition to HDTV



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Snell FormatFusion™ technology creates future-proof hybrid broadcast facility that’s never obsolete.

The Customer

3sixtymedia, an ITV Productions/ BBC Resources joint venture based in Manchester, provides studio, location services, postproduction, and creative facilities for broadcast, film, and commercial production throughout the United Kingdom.

The Challenge

To upgrade a legacy standard definition broadcast television plant with a new production switcher that could handle both complex SD and HDTV production, while integrating smoothly with existing systems. It was especially important that the switcher be upgradable and “future-proof,” allowing 3sixtymedia to expand its HD capability as older parts of the facility were upgraded and refurbished.

The Snell Solution

Kahuna, the world’s first and only production switcher to enable simultaneous standard (SD) and high-definition (HD) operations on the same control surface and in the same mainframe. The switcher’s unprecedented flexibility allows the customer to work initially in SD-only mode and later do a simple software upgrade to full multiformat SD/HD operation.

Kahuna enables the user to integrate any SD video including live cameras, graphics or archives into HD productions, seamlessly, without the need for upconversion. It also allows HD material to be incorporated into HD productions without the need for downconversion.

As demand for HD production becomes increasingly common, Kahuna opens up an enormous range of opportunities for companies like 3sixtymedia. The switcher makes it easy and cost effective to output simultaneous SD and HD versions of any program feed, meeting future needs as they occur.



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Operators can use captions, graphics, hand-held shots, and archives without having to worry about the compatibility of formats or standards. No other switcher now available in the world can do this without outboard equipment.

The Results

3sixtymedia purchased a Kahuna production switcher for its Studio 12 facility in Manchester. Replacing an ageing production switcher, the power of Kahuna was immediately invaluable in the creation of complex television programs such as "Soapstar Superstar" and "A Question of Sport."

3sixtymedia acquired a 3-M/E Kahuna system featuring a 4-M/E option installed in the mainframe, a separate master auxiliary panel, six remote auxiliary panels, four channels of DVE, and an 80-input option. To give the system even greater capability in mixed or dual-format productions, the studio added new switcher options including ancillary data on the auxiliary output, a modulation option, and extended background FormatFusion.

The open architecture of the Kahuna allows every button on the control surface, including the auxiliary panels and remote panels, to be re-mapped using macros. As a result, Kahuna auxiliary panel buttons can be programmed by 3sixtymedia staff, very simply, to perform any task that a macro can control, whether it be mixing two sources, selecting sources for a particular M/E bank, running a DVE move, controlling a disk recorder, or any number of other time-saving actions.

"The switcher has been a flexible and dependable solution that meets our current production needs," said Eric Donbavand, technical supervisor for 3sixtymedia. "In addition to providing technical quality and operational flexibility, the Kahuna gives us the freedom to migrate to HD work cost-effectively and at our own pace."

