



LAMA Customer Case Study



How LAMA's audio software got Eurosport across the line at the Olympic Games Paris 2024

Customer:

Eurosport, Warner Bros, Discovery

Event:

Olympic Games, Paris 2024

Products:

LAMA AutoMix, LAMA AutoSync

Key Numbers:

15,000 commentary sessions

24,000 hrs of commentary

>300 simultaneous commentary sessions
in 19 days

European broadcast powerhouse Eurosport produced 15,000 independent commentary sessions at the Olympic Games Paris 2024, more than triple the number achieved at the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022. Working with audio specialist LAMA, they automated the commentary production using LAMA AutoMix, creating more reliability, maintaining broadcast quality, and delivering massive savings and operational benefits.

Eurosport, part of Warner Bros. Discovery, operates two pan-European channels, Eurosport 1 and 2, with streaming on Max and discovery+, engaging 130 million people across Europe every month. It also operates the number one digital sports and news destination, Eurosport.com, with an average of 38 million unique monthly users.

OVERVIEW

At this year's Olympic Games in Paris, Eurosport had a massive job on its hands – delivering content to 47 markets in 19 languages. Responsible for the delivery of multi-language commentary across all 329 events involving 10,500 athletes, providing live coverage across Eurosport's linear channels including eight dedicated popup channels and live streaming of every event live on Max and discovery+ - the only places to watch every minute of the Olympics in Europe.

Finding the space, hardware, and labour force to repurpose so much content to so many individual markets would prove challenging even for the biggest broadcasters, but with an event of this stature, every broadcaster was looking to exceed expectations and maximize content creation.

Using a software-led solution to automate all of its international commentary tracks remotely, Eurosport worked with LAMA to develop and refine a centralized, software-based audio production approach. This allowed them to deliver industry-standard broadcast mixes to all its markets in Europe.

As the last firework faded on the closing ceremonies, LAMA's automated mixing had helped Eurosport produce an unprecedented 24,000 hours of commentary.

THE CHALLENGE

“All our main markets have regional variations,” says Eurosport’s Director of Audio Technology, Anthony Sachot, who oversees all live production audio engineering and support at WBD Sports.



Anthony Sachot - Director - Audio technology, WBD

“Every one of our pan-European markets has access to every language. For the popup channels, language availability depends on whatever local commercial deals are in place, and for continuously delivered events on WBD platforms (Max and discovery+), every language is available.”

In Paris, Eurosport needed to ensure that every moment of the Games was available live and on replay across all these languages and a selection of events for each of its linear channels. With multiple coverage combinations across different venues, locations, and sports, Eurosport needed a way to automate each commentary feed and associate it with the right international mixes directly from the International Broadcast Centre (IBC) in Paris.

“Eurosport is unique in the number of languages it supports,” says LAMA’s Chief Commercial Officer and Co-Founder at LAMA Ewan Cameron. “It has many independent and culturally distinctive markets to supply, challenges further compounded by many simultaneous events.

“Doing everything with traditional hardware workflows would have been impossible; in addition to the cost of acquisition for all the hardware, there is finding the space to locate everything, the installation and interconnectivity costs, and the power and resulting environmental impact needed to run it. And that’s before you consider the human cost of labour, recruitment, and training to do everything in real time.”

SOLUTION

LAMA has been working with Eurosport since 2019. Its LAMA AutoMix is an intelligent software-first technology that can operate on a PC, an in-house data centre, or in the public cloud. It allows broadcasters to connect multiple audio signals from commentators, international mixes and video sources, and generate a balanced output that adheres to broadcast standards.

Its ‘connect & forget’ approach takes unprocessed microphone feeds and adjusts them in accordance with a predefined target, automatically detecting and adjusting bleed and dynamically levelling speech from multiple sources. By using intelligent content recognition, it also identifies important sounds within the original signal and ensures their level is adjusted to within a standard loudness range.

For broadcasters like Eurosport, whose business is all about capturing the unpredictable and passionate roar of the crowd, maintaining this full dynamic and real time control of an events’ ambiance is crucial.

THE SETUP

At Paris 2024, Eurosport hosted multiple LAMA AutoMix instances across its two data centres in London and Hilversum, providing all of Eurosport's regional markets with remote access to every AutoMix instance via a web-based UI. Each AutoMix engine took a commentary feed from each individual commentator and mixed it with the international sound feed to create a broadcast-ready mix which was available for international users to pick up on both digital and linear broadcast outputs.

It is a workflow that Eurosport has been developing with LAMA for a number of years; it first used the platform at scale to deliver 4,500 commentary sessions at Beijing 2022, utilising around 100 AutoMix instances every day. Since then, it has been in regular use at events like Roland-Garros, Wimbledon, the US Open, the Australian Open and Le Tour de France.

"The LAMA AutoMix platform is complementary to our other production and linear commentary platforms," says Sachot. "In Paris, all our audio feeds were made available by OBS at the IBC in Le Bourget, including commentary which was all done in-market, and the international sound output was pre-mixed onsite. We had a contribution platform which sent the unprocessed, pure commentary feeds and the international broadcast mixes to one of two data centres where it was picked up by LAMA's AutoMix instances running on that particular machine. Although all the incoming feeds were mixed in the datacentres, each of our 18 individual regional markets could access any of those mixes.

"The LAMA AutoMix software ensured that everything was automatically levelled, and every output adhered to industry Loudness standards such as ITU BS.1770-3. Payout was also controlled remotely from Paris and London." The only physical mixing required was when local linear mixers switched the AutoMix feeds between events. It simplified the process to such a degree that local operators were able to concentrate on core tasks like building IFBs, comms and looking after the talent.

THE RESULT

In Paris, Eurosport delivered 15,000 commentary sessions and more than 24,000 hours of commentary from more than 400 expert commentators around Europe, using up to 300 concurrent AutoMix instances in any single day, a volume of coverage which would not have been possible using traditional workflows.

Automating the mixes in accordance with pre-determined parameters also maintained a broadcast consistency which was shared by every international market.

“In addition to enabling Eurosport to do more, the consistency of quality is something that we are very proud of,” says Cameron. “Using one system that is capable of creating a consistent mix across multiple territories, irrespective of the quality of the raw commentary feeds, is a vote of confidence from a qualitative perspective as well as a quantitative one, and it’s one we worked very hard to achieve from the start. When Eurosport’s audio engineers are happy with how everything sounds it means we can start working on the other efficiencies.”

Adopting a centralised model also meant that sync issues which can often plague international sound, like having to pair up commentary mixes with its appropriate international mix across inconsistent connectivity paths, are no longer a problem. Eurosport’s 120 physical commentary units are all connected to this same network as the international sound and mixed centrally in the data centre, which means everything is always perfectly synchronised.

LAMA’s AutoSync software also helped dynamically synchronise program audio to support WBD’s UHD upmixes, by calculating and applying the appropriate delay in real time.

LAMA AutoMix’s API and Web GUI, enabled access to AutoMix from any remote mix position allowing Eurosport to build in more redundancy. Locating half of the platform in the broadcasters’ London data centre, and half in its Hilversum data centre, meant that each AutoMix instance was accessible from any of the 18 mixing positions across Europe.

“We also added physical capacity to provide N+1 redundancy spread across both data centres, which means that clients attached to one of the data centres can switch to the other if we lose one of the data centres, with half of the capacity on each side to support the other,” says Sachot.

Broadcasters have been understandably cautious about switching from trusted hardware-based workflows to software-first environments.

“There has long been a perception that hardware is always going to be more reliable than software,” says Cameron. “But the results of this Olympics have firmly proven that audio software is the way forward and replacing traditional workflows can pay dividends for early adopters like Eurosport.”

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