amagi

An Amagi Case Study | March 2022

Amagi powers Blue Ant Media's growing portfolio of FAST channels

Explore how Blue Ant Media launched broadcast-grade channels across free streaming services, including a 4K UHD channel with Amagi's proven cloud solutions

blue ant media

Blue Ant Media is a leading media and broadcasting company in Canada that's into content production, distribution and TV channel operation. It delivers broadcast TV channels across multiple regions across the world - with Love Nature, Total Crime and Smithsonian being some of its flagship channels. The company creates and produces factual entertainment, lifestyle series, animation, award-winning documentaries and has the largest 4K natural history offering in the Canadian market.

WHAT'S YOUR STORY

DIRECTOR :

CAMERA :

ATE :

Day Nite In

Filter

Amagi-Blue Ant Media engagement summary

Blue Ant Media partnered with Amagi to debut on Free Ad-Supported Streaming TV (FAST). The dynamic content producer was looking to delve into its rich library and deliver a repertoire of high quality content that was missing across FAST platforms. With Amagi as its tech partner, the company began its new-linear journey and launched Love Nature – its premium wildlife and nature brand across free streaming platforms such as Samsung TV Plus in 4K, The Roku Channel, PLEX, VIZIO WatchFree+, LocalNow and KlowdTV in the U.S.

The customer also leveraged Amagi's cloud solutions to deliver and power two additional Blue Ant Media FAST HD channels in Canada, including HauntTV, a paranormal-themed channel, and CrimeTime, the ultimate destination for true crime programming, on Samsung TV and The Roku Channel. Additionally, Amagi helped deliver HauntTV to the Roku Channel in the U.S.

We enabled unique customizations and integrations to meet their business requirements and simplified their programming through efficient automation. Backed by a strong knowledge of the customer's backend and close collaboration with their content, programming and project management teams, we enabled seamless and quick channel launches across the US, Canada, Mexico, UK, France, Spain and a few other parts of Europe. *Driven by its success so far, the customer plans to execute a detailed roadmap for further FAST expansion with Amagi continuing as its tech partner.*

Business requirements

Blue Ant Media wanted to fuel their passion for storytelling by delivering broadcast-grade channels across the globe and maximize content monetization. The customer wanted to partner with a reliable cloud tech partner with extensive experience in the Free Ad-Supported Streaming TV (FAST) space.

HD and UHD channel playout
Leverage a single solution to power HD and UHD broadcast for different channels. They also wanted to ensure that HD and UHD files were appended such that they could differentiate between the two easily.

Infrastructure monitoring solution
To ensure an uninterrupted viewing experience for viewers, Blue Ant Media wanted to ensure that there were no black/frozen screens or sound issues. They wanted an error-free playout.

Playlist integration customizations
Since their main channel, Love Nature's video files are in Broadview (BXF) format, they sought a solution that could ingest/accept it in the same format.

"When it comes to distributing 4K UHD channels, the ability to preserve the original quality and deliver a great viewing experience over large screens is critical. Using Amagi CLOUDPORT, we were able to deliver our 4K UHD channel without transcoding, thereby ensuring that the quality remained intact. Amagi CLOUDPORT could seamlessly integrate with our existing workflow and scheduling engine and deliver high quality output to the distribution platforms."

Julio Sobral
SVP, Latam & U.S. Channel Distribution, Blue Ant Media

Why Amagi?

- Blue Ant Media chose Amagi for our proven track record and mature cloud solutions that help spin up and launch broadcast-grade channels quickly and maximize content monetization opportunities.
- Most importantly, they chose us for our ability to support 4K UHD cloud playout, and our unmatched integration and customization capabilities.

Amagi solutions deployed

Amagi CLOUDPORT – Cloud playout solution
Amagi THUNDERSTORM – SSAI platform

- Spin up and deliver channels on the go, including one 4K UHD feed for Love Nature UHD
- Provide basic secondary graphics (channel logo)
- Build and schedule playlists
- Embed closed captioning in the playout stream so it can be read by downstream platforms
- Enable content monetization for these feeds by providing SCTE 35 markers for ads
- Infrastructure monitoring

Four feeds for Blue Ant Media USA

- Love Nature Australia
- Spanish
- Castilian
- US (Samsung TV)

One feed for Blue Ant Media USA UHD

- Love Nature UHD

Six feeds for Blue Ant Media Canada

- Haunt TV
- Crime Time
- Haunt TV US
- Total Crime
- Homeful Canada
- Homeful US

Feeds being onboarded for Blue Ant Media USA

- Love Nature
- US Roku
- Nature Time EMEA

AWS services leveraged - Amazon S3

Channel creation: Ingest & scheduling

Media assets including the closed captions are ingested and dropped in the Amagi cloud storage - S3 bucket. The metadata for all ingested content is uploaded to Amagi CLOUDPORT UI using the Amagi CSV metadata template. This is updated in the Amagi metastore that serves as the reference for preparing EPG for the channels, based on the playlist the customer publishes.

Post asset, metadata and closed captions ingestion, the SCTE markers are scheduled. The schedules published in the HD feed for the current + 29 days are cloned for the UHD feed by appending a U at the end of each file name.

The customer wanted to ensure that HD and UHD files were appended such that they could differentiate between the two easily, and simplify the scheduling process. The HD video files are therefore saved with 'HD' in the file name while 4K files have 'U' appended in their file names. This way, the customer can avoid preparing and publishing two playlists for HD and UHD channels separately and simplify the scheduling process.

The playlists published are synced every six hours. Schedulers review this process regularly and ensure timely publishing of the playlist for both HD and UHD channels.

Content monetization using dynamic ad insertion

Blue Ant Media uses Amagi THUNDERSTORM for monetization of its channels and deliver them as multi bitrate (MBR) HLS after configuring the ad tags given by the platforms. To create an output format that is consumable by the platforms, the UDP stream from the cloud player is converted into HLS stream. The output MBR HLS stream is then fed to Amagi THUNDERSTORM – DAI platform.

When Amagi THUNDERSTORM reads a SCTE marker in the stream, it recognizes that as a spot for monetization or ad placement. Amagi THUNDERSTORM fetches relevant ads by interacting with an ad server which is configured through ad tags. The ads are finally stitched in the stream and delivered as the output stream.

Amagi doesn't handle content monetization for channels delivered to platforms such as Orange TV, Pluto TV and Samsung USA, which monetize the ad spots themselves. For instance, for Love Nature UHD, we only deliver a redundant SRT feed with SCTE markers to Samsung USA.

In these cases, the MBR HLS feed is directly fed to the platform instead of THUNDERSTORM. The output file could be HLS, SRT or Zixi based on the format the platform wants it in. Along with the output stream, Amagi also provides an Electronic Program Guide (EPG) according to platform specifications.

Infrastructure monitoring

All assets ingested into Amagi CLOUDPORT go through a QC in the beginning to avoid screen freeze/black frames, silence and so on. While performing the QC, if the issue (black screen etc.) is identified for over 10 seconds, QC fails automatically. Necessary actions then need to be taken before using these assets and ingesting them into Amagi CLOUDPORT.

The final streams are also monitored for issues, and as soon as these errors are detected, the customer is immediately notified. If any of the Amagi-powered components on cloud go down, Amagi gets notified as a part of infrastructure monitoring as well - and the team restores the channel promptly.

Unique customizations for 4K UHD channel – Love Nature UHD

- Cloning HD playlist in UHD and syncing them up every six hours, thus enabling the customer to save time and effort in creating and publishing two separate schedules.

- Playlist integration using customized codes. Love Nature UHD channels have files in Broadview format (BXF), which are loaded as is in the S3 bucket. Understanding BXF playlists is a process Amagi has specially developed for Blue Ant Media.

  The 4K files are .BXF files which are transcoded using our transcoding engine and converted into .TS format – the common format used by Amagi. The UDP output from the Cloud player is fed to Zixi media connect feeder to generate the Zixi stream - which is further converted into MBR HLS to be delivered to Samsung USA. Samsung leverages its own CDN to monetize the UHD content.

- Simplifying various processes by automating the programming logic to ensure seamless new channel launches across the world.

Amagi impact

With our suite of cloud-architected solutions and innovations, we delivered the following key benefits

- **Reduced time & effort** through unique customizations in the programming logic, especially to handle BXF playlists
- **Cost effectiveness** by using a single solution for HD and UHD channels
- **Greater efficiency** in scheduling content
- **Enhanced monetization** via targeted ads
- **Rich viewing experiences** through 4K UHD cloud playout – to bolster Blue Ant Media's established brand
- **Expanded reach** across the globe and established a strong presence in the growing FAST ecosystem
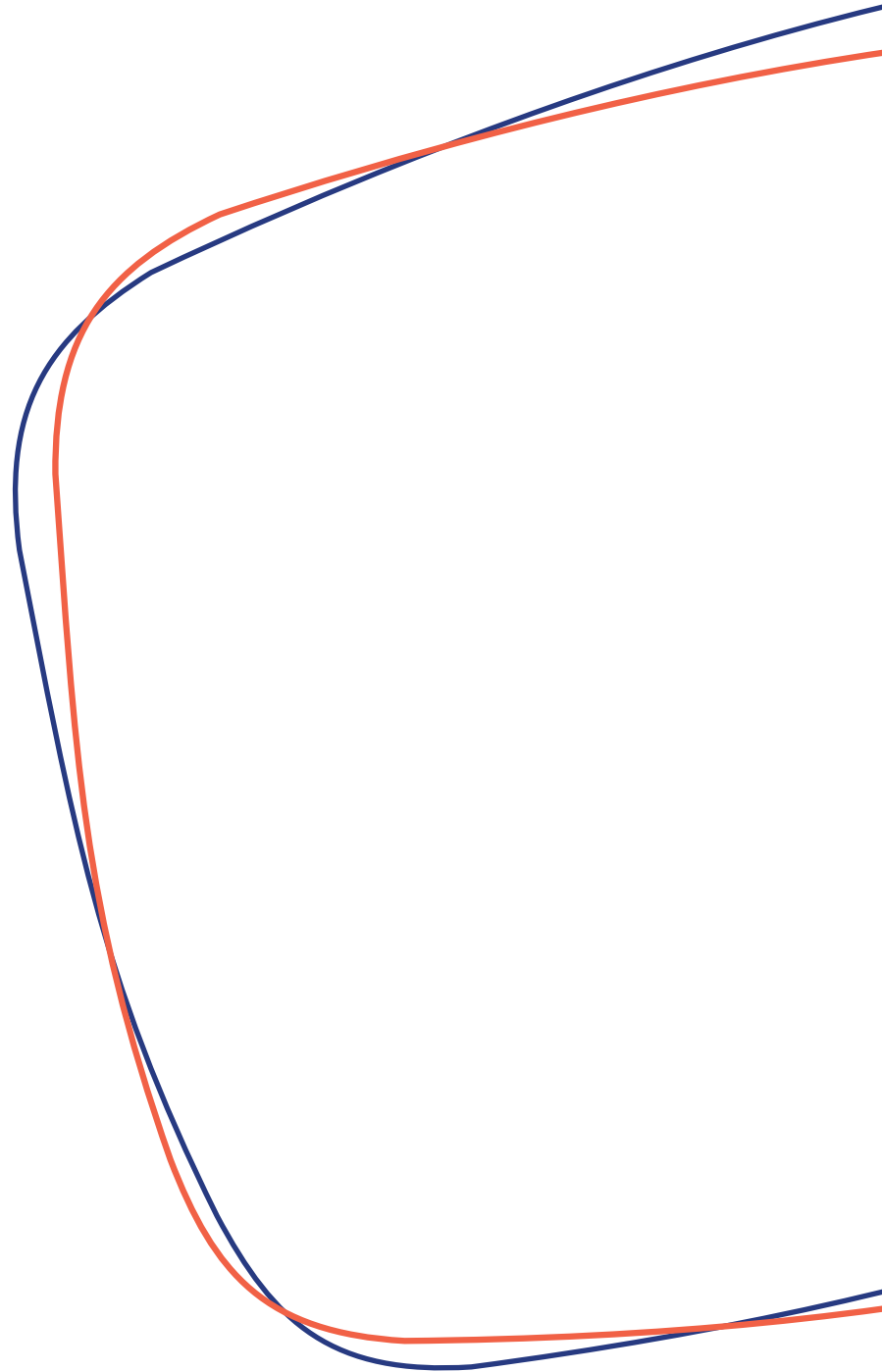
Thrive with us!

Reach out to us at **cloudandme@amagi.com** to ace your FAST strategy

About Amagi

Amagi is a next-gen media tech company that provides cloud broadcast and streaming TV solutions to TV networks, content owners and streaming TV platforms. Amagi enables content owners to launch, distribute and monetize live linear channels on Free-Ad-Supported Streaming TV and SVOD platforms. Amagi also offers 24x7 cloud managed services bringing simplicity, advanced automation, and transparency to the entire broadcast operations for traditional TV networks. Amagi delivers 500+ channels with deployments in over 40 countries. Amagi has presence in New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris, Singapore, New Delhi and Bangalore.

amagi.com