

Riedel Extends Comms and Signal Distribution Solutions Supporting 2021 Eurovision Song Contest



For the 15th year, Riedel Communications provided advanced intercom and signal distribution technologies and on-site engineering support for the record-breaking 65th edition of the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC). Staged May 18-22 at the Rotterdam Ahoy, this year's broadcast marked the ESC debut of several new Riedel solutions, including the top-of-the-line Artist-1024 digital matrix intercom node and SFP modules from the new MediorNet IP range of signal processing solutions.

Back after a pandemic-induced cancellation in 2020, the 2021 Eurovision Song Contest drew an audience of 183 million viewers across 36 markets - with a live audience for the Grand Final show on May 22 that was an estimated 4% higher than that of the 2019 competition. Riedel supplied a complete solution that included not only intercom and signal distribution, but also accreditation, access control, commentary systems, and a comprehensive IT infrastructure for staff, broadcasters, and attending press members.

In addition to managing radio communications, distribution of images inside the Ahoy Arena, and delivery of audiovisual signals for broadcast and production, Riedel outfitted commentator booths and oversaw communication with the master control

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rooms in each of the countries that customized the EBU broadcast. In addition, Riedel introduced several COVID-19 prevention measures designed to protect all technical team members and minimize the risk of infection at accreditation and access control points.



This year's ESC production included 24 cameras together with 130 video feeds, 140 intercom panels, 75 microphones, 1,800 luminaires, five mobile units, a technical operations center, three support vehicles, and 60 EVS channels - a setup designed to shape a signal that could be seen all over Europe, Australia, and the USA with incoming connections from 40 different countries.

The Riedel Artist-1024 intercom node supplied the highest-possible intercom port density as well as full AES67 compliance, a critical capability, as this year's ESC production was the first to leverage an AES67 audio network. The IP-based signal transport mechanism complementing a 60-node MediorNet MicroN network relied on Riedel's MediorNet MuoN SFP gateway and processing devices and MediorNet FusioN stand-alone I/O and processing devices. At Ahoy, the MuoN modules were configured with Riedel's SMPTE ST-2110-compliant MADI bidirectional gateway app, providing encapsulation and de-encapsulation of MADI signals to IP for commentary. The FusioN devices acted as 16-image SMPTE ST-2110 multiviewers and enabled video distribution inside the ESC commentary control room.



Picture: Nathan Reinds

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Other key Riedel elements were the 1200 and 2300 Series SmartPanel user interfaces, equipped with software apps to provide additional functionality above their primary purpose as intercom panels. With the powerful MediorNet Control App installed, the 2300 Series SmartPanels gave users flexible routing and control over audio and video signals using the high-resolution, multitouch color displays and intuitive touch-screen UI. The production also employed 64 Riedel Bolero wireless intercom belt packs.

To provide and maintain a safe production environment, Riedel followed strict distancing and prevention measures within the bubble and developed a complex accreditation front end and access control system - based on the results of the 26,000 COVID-19 tests administered to all staff - to preserve that bubble. The RFID-based solution included automatic deactivation of accreditations after 48 hours, with reactivation upon submission of a negative COVID test result.

“The Eurovision Song Contest is a complex production, and it evolves from year to year with ongoing improvement to technical and operational aspects, as well as the fan experience,” said Yung Min Lee, Senior Project Manager at Riedel Communications. “This year’s event presented an array of new challenges, and we’re absolutely thrilled with how successfully the whole production unfolded.”

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