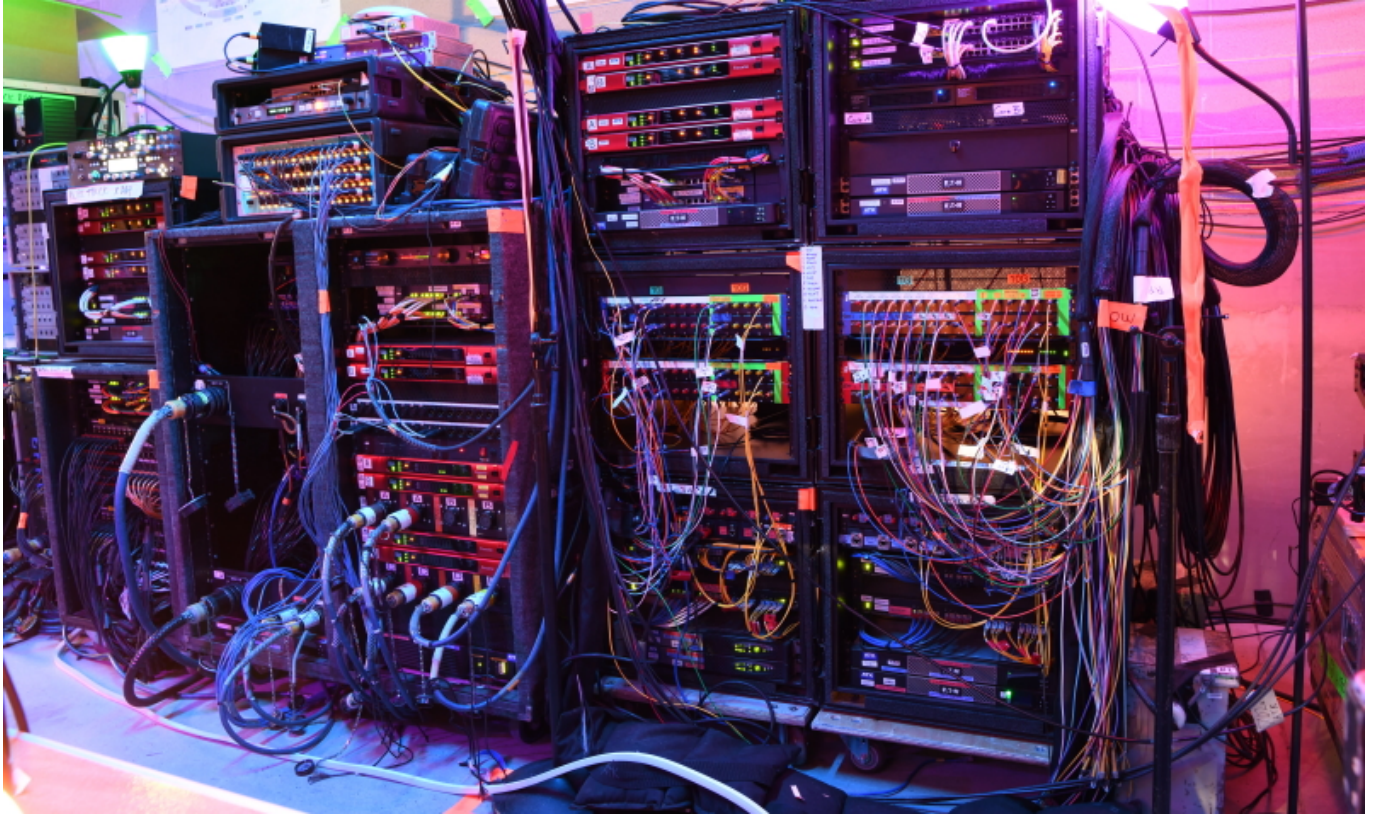Friday, 16 February 2024 09:00

Focusrite RedNet Components used for Super Bowl LVIII Coverage

On February 11, 2024, the Kansas City Chiefs and San Francisco 49ers faced off at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas, Nevada. As one of the most highly anticipated sports events of the year, Super Bowl LVIII had viewership of 123.4 million. The Apple Music Super Bowl LVIII Halftime Show performance by Usher was a nostalgic, heart-pumping spectacle to match the big game. Once again, ATK Audiotek (a Clair Global company), the live-sound provider for the Super Bowl for the past 27 consecutive years, had an all-digital audio signal path thanks to an extensive Dante networked audio infrastructure featuring components from Focusrite's RedNet range of Dante-networked audio converters and interfaces.

"This is our ninth year using Focusrite RedNet with our Dante Audio-over IP network at the Super Bowl," stated Kirk Powell, Engineer-in-Charge for ATK/Clair at Super Bowl LVIII. "This year we are employing over 100 RedNet units, which is the largest Focusrite setup used on a Super Bowl to date." Once again ATK is responsible for all the audio in the stadium, including the pre-game performances that featured Reba McEntire (who performed the national anthem), Post Malone and Andra Day; the halftime show with Usher and special guests Alicia Keys, H.E.R., Jermaine Dupri, Ludacris, Lil Jon, will.i.am; and announcements throughout the game to the fans at Allegiant Stadium, so having a bullet-proof system is paramount. "Each year the Super Bowl presents an immense logistical hurdle which involves handling a multitude of diverse audio sources and routing them to various destinations,"

commented Powell. "Utilizing Focusrite RedNet components is indispensable for our operations, as they provide the connectivity and versatility necessary for us to execute our tasks effectively."

ATK Audiotek's Focusrite gear setup for Super Bowl LVIII included 25 RedNet D16R MkII 16-channel AES3 I/O's; 35 RedNet A16R MkII 16-channel analogue I/O interfaces; 25 RedNet D64R 64-channel MADI bridges; 12 RedNet MP8R 8-channel remote-controlled mic pre with dual PSUs; and eight RedNet AM2 stereo audio monitoring units, for a grand total of 105 RedNet units.

During Super Bowl LVIII, A16R units facilitated connectivity across diverse interfaces managed by the venue and other parties, while D16R units linked with amplifiers. RedNet D64R MADI bridges were utilized to connect with consoles and broadcast trucks. Effective clock management is crucial during the Super Bowl, benefiting both teams and audio production. The RedNet D64R combines a generous channel capacity with the capability to convert sample rates across different audio systems at a multitrack level, ensuring seamless inter-system audio transfer and sharing without relying on a common master reference clock. According to Powell, while the FOH and stage monitors could synchronize to the same clock, there's a distinction with the production truck. Powell elaborates, "The production truck operates on a separate clock since they're not in use all day. The D64R enables me to separate the clock between my system and the production truck, especially as they wrap up after halftime. As they begin to dismantle, I prefer not to be synchronized to their clock to avoid any premature shutdowns. We are also using the D16Rs and A16Rs because we're doing analogue backup as the interface for the system's amplifiers."

When asked what the most challenging aspect was of designing and installing the audio system for Super Bowl LVIII, Powell didn't have to think twice: "Flying the P.A.," he said. "Allegiant Stadium's ceiling structure is cable-based, just like SoFi Stadium, which restricts options for placing clusters and similar components due to weight restrictions and rigging points." He further notes, "Managing rigging and cables presented challenges, as did determining optimal amplifier placement. We had to compromise on a few positions, but the system worked out really well. Also, with renowned mixers Dave Natale and Alex Guessard handling FOH duties, the audio for the performances sounded great."

Focusrite equipment has been instrumental in ATK/Clair finding their rhythm for this yearly occasion. Powell remarks, "While the venue's routing may vary, we've established a consistent setup, with RedNet playing a significant role. In such a large-scale event, reliability is paramount, and RedNet ensures the smooth operation of our network."

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