



# Video & Entertainment

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## Telestream’s Argus brings cloud consolidation to quality monitoring



By [Alex Davies](#)

US quality control specialist Telestream has unveiled Argus, its new video monitoring and management platform, aimed at video workflows that stand to benefit from shiny new ‘single-pane-of-glass’ dashboards and automated functions.

Charlie Dunn, SVP of the Video Quality and Analytics Business Unit, and Joel Daly, VP of Product Management, were on hand to brief Faultline, ahead of the big reveal at IBC.

Dunn explained that the 2017 acquisition of IneoQuest and the 2019 merger with Tektronix opened the door for the monitoring products – establishing the business unit in 2019, which by Telestream’s reckoning now serves around 50% of the linear market and about 37% of the OTT equivalent.

The new Argus offering is essentially an evolution of what Telestream has offered via its Intelligent Video Management System (iVMS ASM) products. The old approach was a series of on-prem servers, called probes, which would carry out the monitoring functions – used mostly by linear pay TV workflows.

Monitoring the quality of delivered video is crucial for various rights agreements and SLAs, and so a system like this is necessary – especially as you will lose visibility of your workflow’s quality once third parties like CDNs are introduced. The rise of OTT, with its more commonly cloud-native workflows, means that these monitoring systems need a cloud-based equivalent. In addition, many of the older linear workflows are migrating to cloud production and distribution environments.

To this end, Telestream has brokered partnerships with vendors that are closer to the end-users, including NPAW and Conviva on the QoE analytic side, so that it can span the entire production and delivery chain. Here, Telestream is pulling analytics from the third-party clients, but elsewhere in the chain, the probes are essentially emulating the experience that is available. Based on the available network bandwidth, Telestream can then estimate the performance of the dozens or hundreds of different versions of a title, for all the anticipated viewing devices.



“This creates a way to report back and lets you adjust,” explained Dunn. “The main difference is that when you look at the end client, you can only see what’s happening at that point. It is pretty hard to work out why something has happened, and you only get the one bitrate too. With the synthetic simulated players, you can test all the bitrates.”

The new Argus suite still supports on-prem workflow elements. The software that forms the bulk of the offering can run on appliances, dedicated servers, or be virtualized. For cloud platforms, containers and Kubernetes are the key. Dunn stressed that it can be sold in a bunch of different ways, and is tailored to suit customer needs.

While perpetual or ongoing licenses are still a thing, the new Argus approach focuses on a ‘pay-as-you-grow’ model.

Currently, Dunn says 80% of usage is still traditional on-prem software, with around 15% to 18% virtualized software but still under the on-prem umbrella. The remaining sub-5% is purely cloud-based, but Telestream expects to see a doubling of the cloud footprint within a year. Track that doubling rate forward, and half the workload will be cloud-based in around three years, and entirely within five, of course.

“No one buys \$150k IP probes now,” said Dunn, remarking on the potential for cloud growth. “It is rare that we replace someone in the cloud, as they are either on-prem and looking to upgrade, or are already a customer.”

Speaking of rivals, Dunn pointed to Bridge Technologies and Sencore, which have a reseller partnership, in the more traditional linear service provider space, and Interra Systems and TouchStream in the newer cloud sector. Dunn added that there is some indirect competition from the likes of Conviva, NPAW, and Witbe, as those draw more budget dollars from clients, as they like to spend at the end-player level.

With some customers handling 5,000 streams, using thousands of probes, Telestream is keen to point to the necessity of automation in these workflows. Dunn outlined how the Inspector Sentry product sits post-encoder, to catch problems before they reach the origin servers, and how the Surveyor ABR products sit within the CDN networks, to this end.

These feed data back to the centralized Argus dashboard, via APIs, allowing users to test their networks all the way back to the video file manifests and their associated chunks, should you want to. For global events, where you expect a big ramp up in viewers, such tests are a good idea, said Dunn. They can turn up all manner of gremlins.

Dunn said that the automation is not yet at the point where it automatically implements fixes, but that it does do quite a lot in terms of reporting the fault. This significantly reduces the time needed to fix a problem. The next step, said Dunn, is the addition of AI-based decision making, which is achievable. Currently, the system significantly reduces the number of monitoring staff needed, from a room of 40 people to just the one box, claimed Dunn.

Back in the day, when the service providers controlled essentially the entire network all the way to the viewer, fault finding was a bit more straightforward. Nowadays, a different approach is needed. To this end, the new cloud-based approach also allows the largest users to consolidate their workflows into one environment.

Historically, there were limits on the number of probes you could use, measured in the hundreds, which necessitated a regional approach.

Daly added that there are still some very large customers that would want to run an on-prem version of Argus, such is the scale of their operations. Globally, there might be twenty very large operators that need Argus, and the expectation is the cloud approach will prove more popular in time.

As for whether Telestream feared the likes of AWS, Google, or Microsoft muscling in on this cloud-based opportunity, Dunn isn’t worried, saying that Telestream is simply “providing software that drives demand for their CPUs, RAM, and storage.”

The probes are typically off-the-shelf servers, often Dell units, running between 8 and 20 CPU cores. On these servers, the Telestream software is run. This can be containerized, run in virtual machines, or as a dedicated appliance. Currently, VVC and AV1 are not supported, but are part of the roadmap. Telestream will add them when customers start using them in their workflows.

Separately, Telestream announced an integration of the Surveyor ABR Active product within Verimatrix’s StreamKeeper Multi-DRM offering. This means Verimatrix Secure Delivery Platform customers will be able to use the QoE monitoring functions. The two are longstanding partners.

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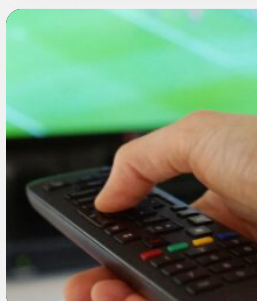
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