Matrox Takes Pole Position in Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix Race Control Room

Mura MPX Series controller boards drive 12-monitor video wall featuring 10 universal inputs and 32 composite video feeds to keep track of race

By Ryan Szporer, Matrox Graphics Inc. and Chris Dodds, The P.A. People

Summary

The Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix is traditionally the first stop of the Formula 1 season, guaranteeing a lot of eyes are watching each year. And that doesn’t apply to just people in the stands or at home. In the race control room, officials were following the action as well, thanks in large part to Matrox Mura™ MPX Series video wall controller boards. The P.A. People, specialist contractors within the ProAV sector, were commissioned by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to deliver a large-scale video wall for easy access to critical information, including race and driver details, weather forecasts, and closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage. This would enable officials to monitor all that was going on around and on the track. The P.A. People then sought out the help of Matrox Graphics and Mura MPX Series specifically for the cost-effective integration of a system capable of powering the desired 6 x 2, 12-monitor installation featuring 10 universal inputs and 32 composite video feeds.

The Challenge

Officials working within the race control room are tasked with making important decisions that potentially affect the outcome of a given race, as well as the entire Formula One World Championship season as a result. Decisions of this magnitude are usually made when rules are broken and drivers are consequently penalized. Other situations that arise and involve race control include the management of medical emergencies, tracking individual driver speeds, and monitoring weather changes.

Officials are able to do all this by keeping track of all goings-on through a network of CCTV cameras and other inputs. A video wall facilitates these efforts and in turn the job of the race director, who is in charge of managing event logistics. When something goes wrong or, ideally, is about to, the race director is immediately made aware.

To ensure the race would go smoothly from an operational standpoint, The P.A. People, who specialize in event communications, were tasked with meeting the Australian Grand Prix Corporation’s need for a 12-monitor wall with a total of 32 composite video feeds (track cameras) and 10 universal inputs: 2 switched-vision feeds, and 8 miscellaneous data (lap times, race position, and weather, etc. feeds).

In Mura MPX, we found exactly the type of powerful, yet cost-effective solution that we were looking for. We look forward to implementing an equally effective Mura MPX-driven solution at next year’s race!

Chris Dodds
Managing Director,
The P.A. People
However, there were other conditions that needed to be met. “Part of the challenge was that the video wall needed to interface with the existing analog-based camera system, but needed to be flexible enough for our rental operation to accommodate an IP-based solution in the future,” said Chris Dodds, Managing Director at The P.A. People.

The Solution

The P.A. People promptly started searching for a viable and reliable video wall solution. Matrox Mura MPX Series first drew their attention due to its cost effectiveness and highly impressive feature set. After conducting some more research, The P.A. People decided their initial instincts were on target. “The Mura platform provided an upgrade path between an analog and IP solution, without resorting to a very expensive turnkey solution. By using a Matrox certified chassis solution, the Trenton TVC4401 worked pretty much out of the box,” said Dodds.

The Trenton TVC4401 video wall controller system is validated with up to six Mura MPX Series PCI Express® x16 Gen2 boards. At the Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix, three Mura MPX-4/4 boards managed the 10 universal inputs and the 12 Samsung 460UX monitors in a 6x2 configuration. Two MPX-V16 boards handled the additional camera feeds. Meanwhile, the Mura Network Application Program Interface provided operators with an easily accessible means to remotely control the wall.

A wide selection of Mura MPX-validated systems in addition to interoperability between different Mura MPX models gives system integrators the flexibility to create specifically tailored video wall solutions of up to 16 boards, 56 HD monitors, and 56 HD inputs. These are parameters that, needless to say, easily met the Australian Grand Prix Corporation's stringent audiovisual requirements for the event.

The Result

Regarding the race itself, McLaren-Mercedes driver Jenson Button won, with teammate Lewis Hamilton coming in third, and Red Bull-Renault's Sebastian Vettel rounding out the podium. The Mura MPX Series video wall controller boards flawlessly captured and displayed Button's victory from start to finish in the control room. In the process Mura MPX also provided sufficient processing power and impressive input flexibility, meeting the Australian Grand Prix Corporation's strict audiovisual needs and budget. The Australian Grand Prix Corporation was so pleased with the end result that they have asked The P.A. People to return to the 2013 Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix.

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For More Information

Matrox Mura MPX Series video wall controller boards are the building blocks of high-performance, scalable installations that meet the most demanding requirements of system integrators. Featuring both high-definition outputs and high-definition inputs, Mura MPX is key to the assembly of everything from small-scale, single-board presentation systems to large-scale, multi-board configurations to be used as operational hubs within control rooms of all types. New fanless models feature no moving parts to eliminate background noise and enhance reliability. High-bandwidth Digital Content Protection (HDCP) compliance simplifies the work of AV Integrators seeking to enable copy protected content across Mura MPX-driven video walls. Contact Matrox Graphics to learn more.